shiwo komeyama

10

BLOODY CROSS

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10

BLOODY CROSS

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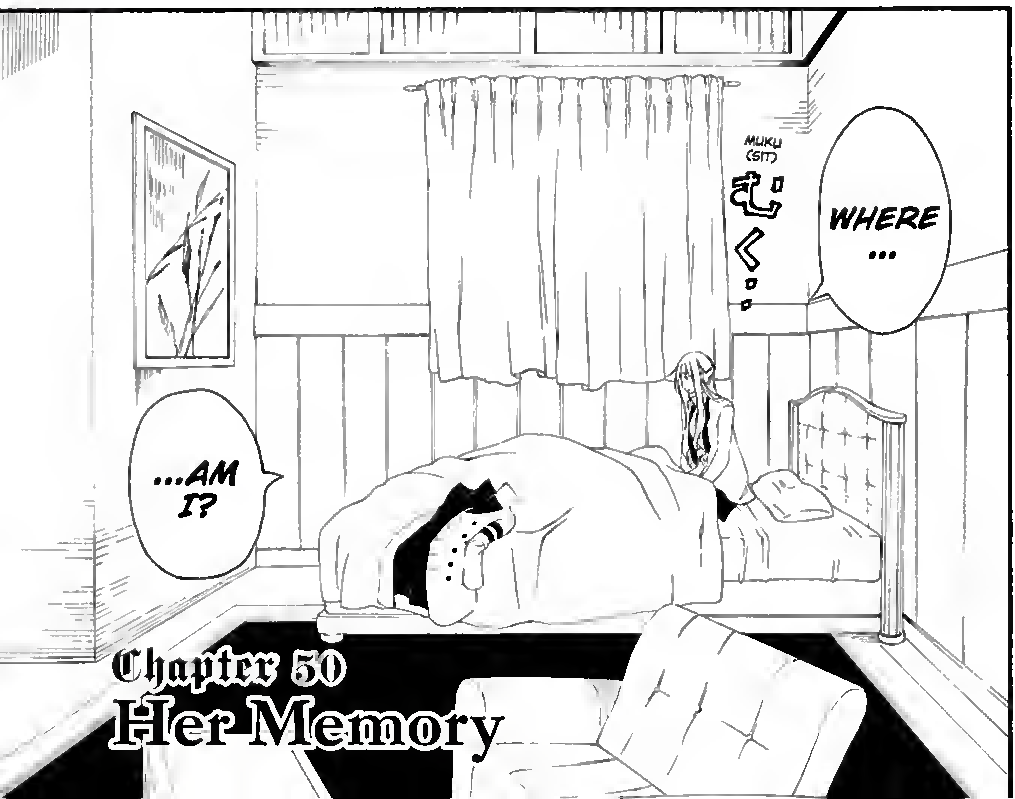
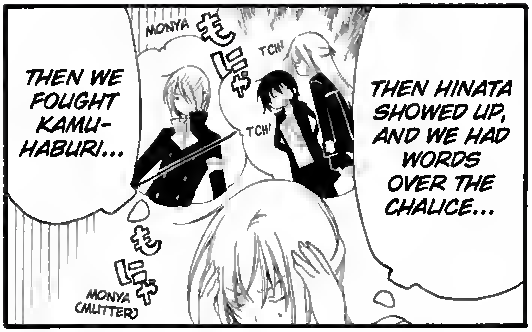
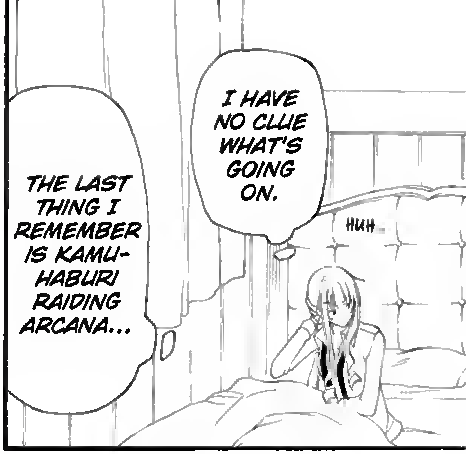
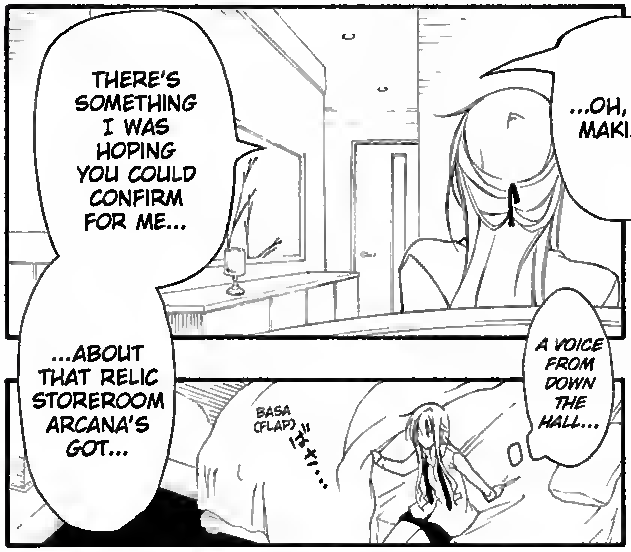
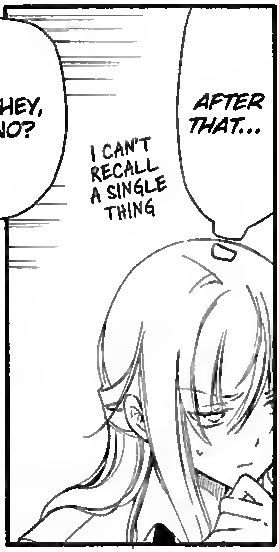


Chapter 50
Her Memory


THEN WE FOUGHT KAMU-HABURI...
MONYA
TCH!
TCH!
MONYA (MUTTER)
THEN HINATA SHOWED UP, AND WE HAD WORDS OVER THE CHALICE...


I HAVE NO CLUE WHAT'S GOING ON.
HUH
THE LAST THING I REMEMBER IS KAMU-HABURI RAIDING ARCANA...


THERE'S SOMETHING I WAS HOPING YOU COULD CONFIRM FOR ME...
...ABOUT THAT RELIC STOREROOM ARCANA'S GOT...
...OH, HEY, MAKINO?
A VOICE FROM DOWN THE HALL...
BASA (FLAP)

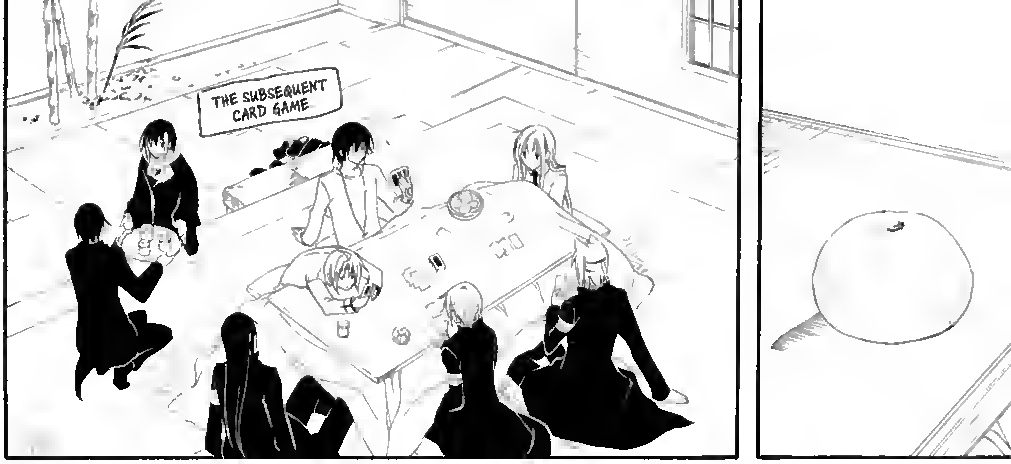

AFTER THAT...
I CAN'T RECALL A SINGLE THING

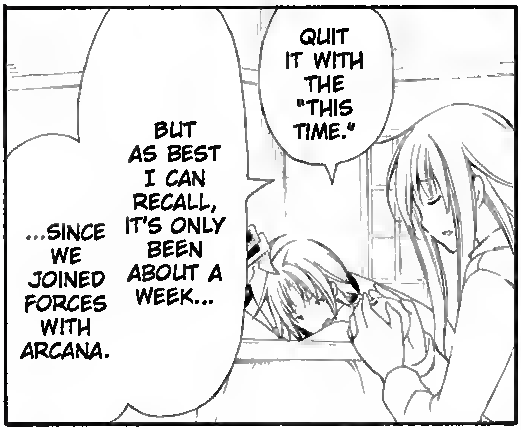
NIYA (SMIRK)
NIYA
Huh?
Oh, that'd be—
WHO CONTROLS THE KEY CODE, AGAIN?

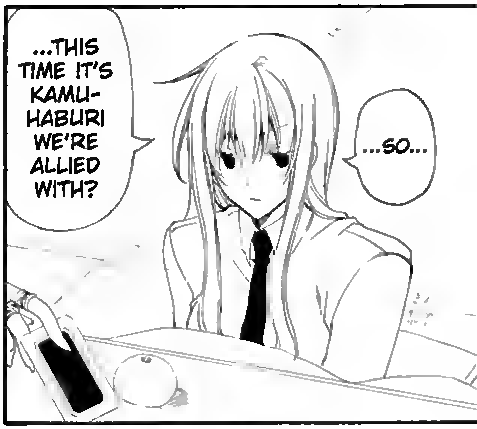
...TCH.
DARN
BUTSU (CLICK)
I ain't leaking any intel to the likes of you!!
You've got a lot of nerve, calling me!
GA (CRUNCH)
GIMME A BREAK!
...Hey!
You're the enemy now!!
UP TO THE SAME DIRTY TRICKS, I SEE...
LOSER.
MISHI (SMASH)
OH, TSUKI-MIYA-SAN.
MORN-ING.
MIND MOVING YOUR ELBOW?

PASH! (SNATCH)
SURE, SURE.
HM? AH, RIGHT.
I'M COMPLETELY LOST.
CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON?
COME WITH ME THEN.
IT'LL BE EASIER TO EXPLAIN DOWN THIS WAY.
KOTSU (TOK)
KOTSU
DOWN HERE...?
WHERE IS "HERE" ANYWAY?
KAMU-HABURI'S NEW STRONGHOLD.
GACHA (KACHAK)
KAMU-HABURI?
HUH?

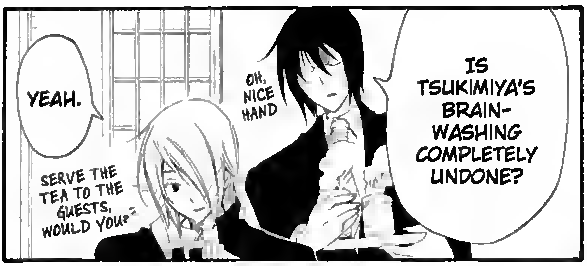
I'M... RETIRING FROM BEING A POP IDOL.
MY... ...BABY GIRL...
...HAS JUST BEEN BORN!
DON'T TRY TO STOP ME. IT'S MY LIFE. I'LL DO WHAT I WANT!
NO WAY... YOU CAN'T RETIRE NOW! WHAT WILL YOU DO?
WHATEVER. JUST HURRY UP AND PAY WHAT YOU OWE.
DAN (SLAM)
KIKU-SAKA... YOU HUMAN FILTH!
OH. WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN OUR BOARD GAME?
IT'S THE GAME OF LIFE
.....
WHA ...?
WAI (CHATTER)
REVENGE TASTES SO SWEET!
MY FIFTH CHILD, HUH. I NEED A NEW CAR.
TAKING THIS ONE BILLION DOLLARS WILL BANKRUPT ME...!
GUGUGU GUGUGU (TWITCH)
GAAAH!
GOD DAMN IT!
AH... TOO BAD.
TSUZUKI-SAN FAILS TO CHANGE JOBS AND DROPS TO UNEM-PLOYED STATUS.

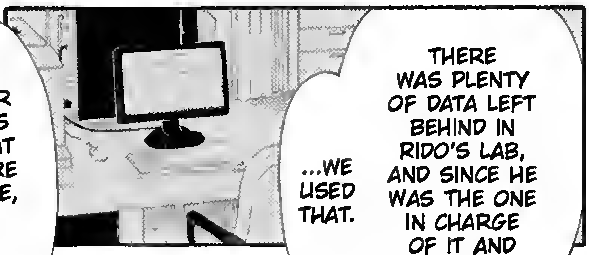

THE SUBSEQUENT CARD GAME


QUIT IT WITH THE "THIS TIME."
BUT AS BEST I CAN RECALL, IT'S ONLY BEEN ABOUT A WEEK...
...SINCE WE JOINED FORCES WITH ARCANA.


...THIS TIME IT'S KAMU-HABURI WE'RE ALLIED WITH?
...SO...

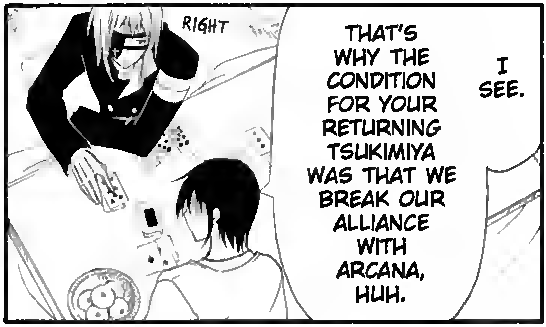
MUKI (PEEL)
MUKI
...IT WORK-ED.
SINCE HER MEMORIES FROM THAT PERIOD ARE ALSO GONE, WE'RE PRETTY SURE...

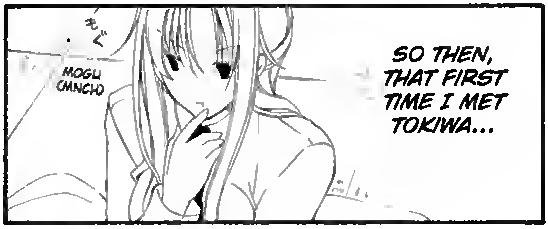

YEAH.
SERVE THE TEA TO THE GUESTS, WOULD YOU?
OH, NICE HAND
IS TSUKIMIYA'S BRAIN-WASHING COMPLETELY UNDONE?


...WE USED THAT.
THERE WAS PLENTY OF DATA LEFT BEHIND IN RIDO'S LAB, AND SINCE HE WAS THE ONE IN CHARGE OF IT AND ALL...

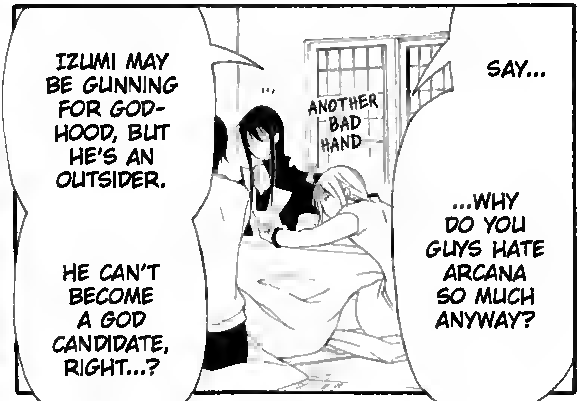
FRANKLY, BRAIN-WASHING OR SAFE-GUARDING A BLACK SEAL BEARER...
...IS TOO MUCH MEDDLING FOR US CRUSADE OVERSEERS, BUT...
...WE COULDN'T LEAVE THE BLACK SEAL NEAR ARCANA...

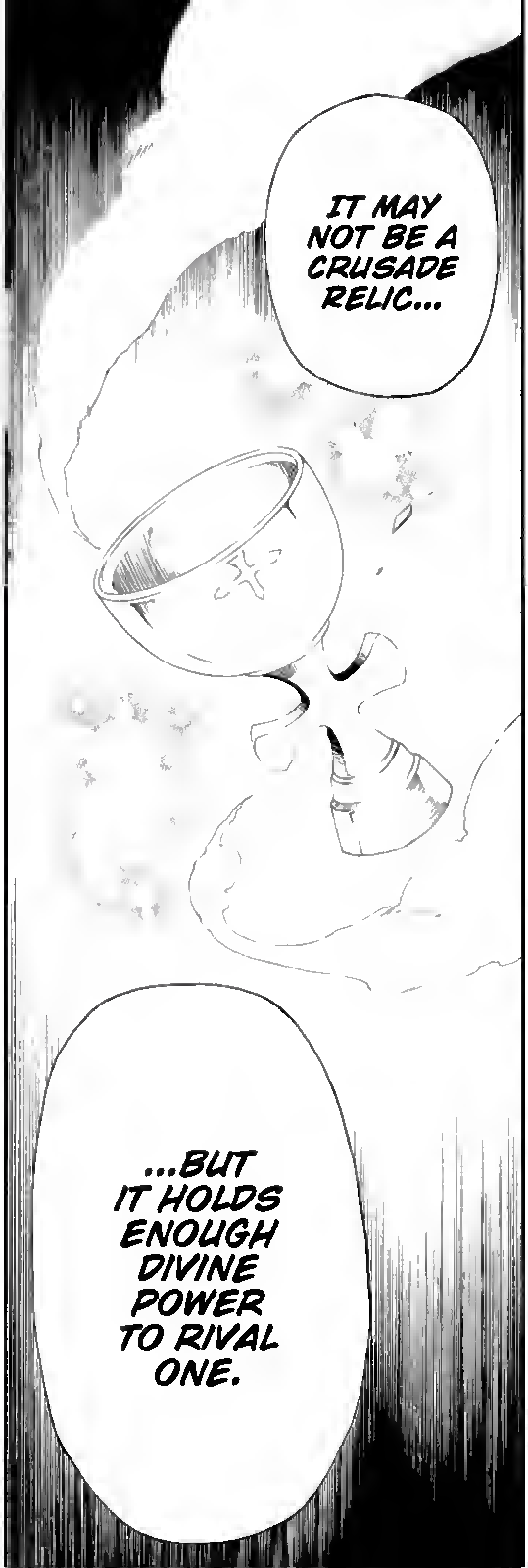
...I WAS ONLY LEFT UNSCATHED...
...BECAUSE KAMUHABURI DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE PACT YET.


I SEE.
THAT'S WHY THE CONDITION FOR YOUR RETURNING TSUKIMIYA WAS THAT WE BREAK OUR ALLIANCE WITH ARCANA, HUH.
RIGHT


SO THEN, THAT FIRST TIME I MET TOKIWA...
MOGU CHNCHO

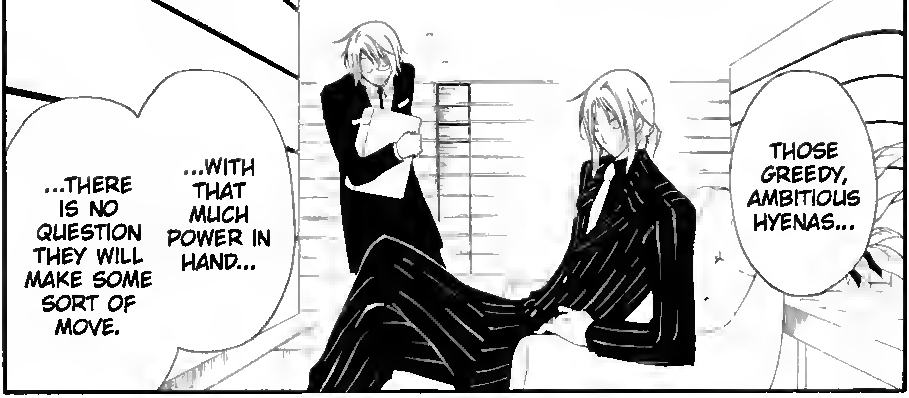
NOT IF HE WERE ANY ORDINARY OUTSIDER.


IZUMI MAY BE GUNNING FOR GOD-HOOD, BUT HE'S AN OUTSIDER.
HE CAN'T BECOME A GOD CANDIDATE, RIGHT...?
...
ANOTHER BAD HAND
SAY...
...WHY DO YOU GUYS HATE ARCANA SO MUCH ANYWAY?


IT MAY NOT BE A CRUSADE RELIC...
...BUT IT HOLDS ENOUGH DIVINE POWER TO RIVAL ONE.

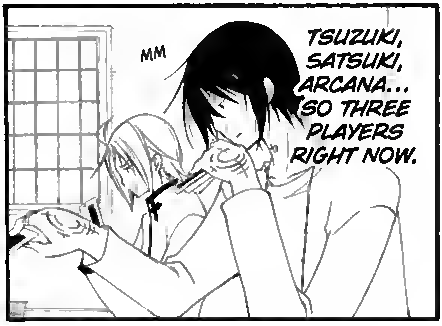
?

THE PROBLEM LIES...
...WITH ONE OF THE DIVINE RELICS IN THEIR POSSESSION.
THE CHALICE OF CREATION.

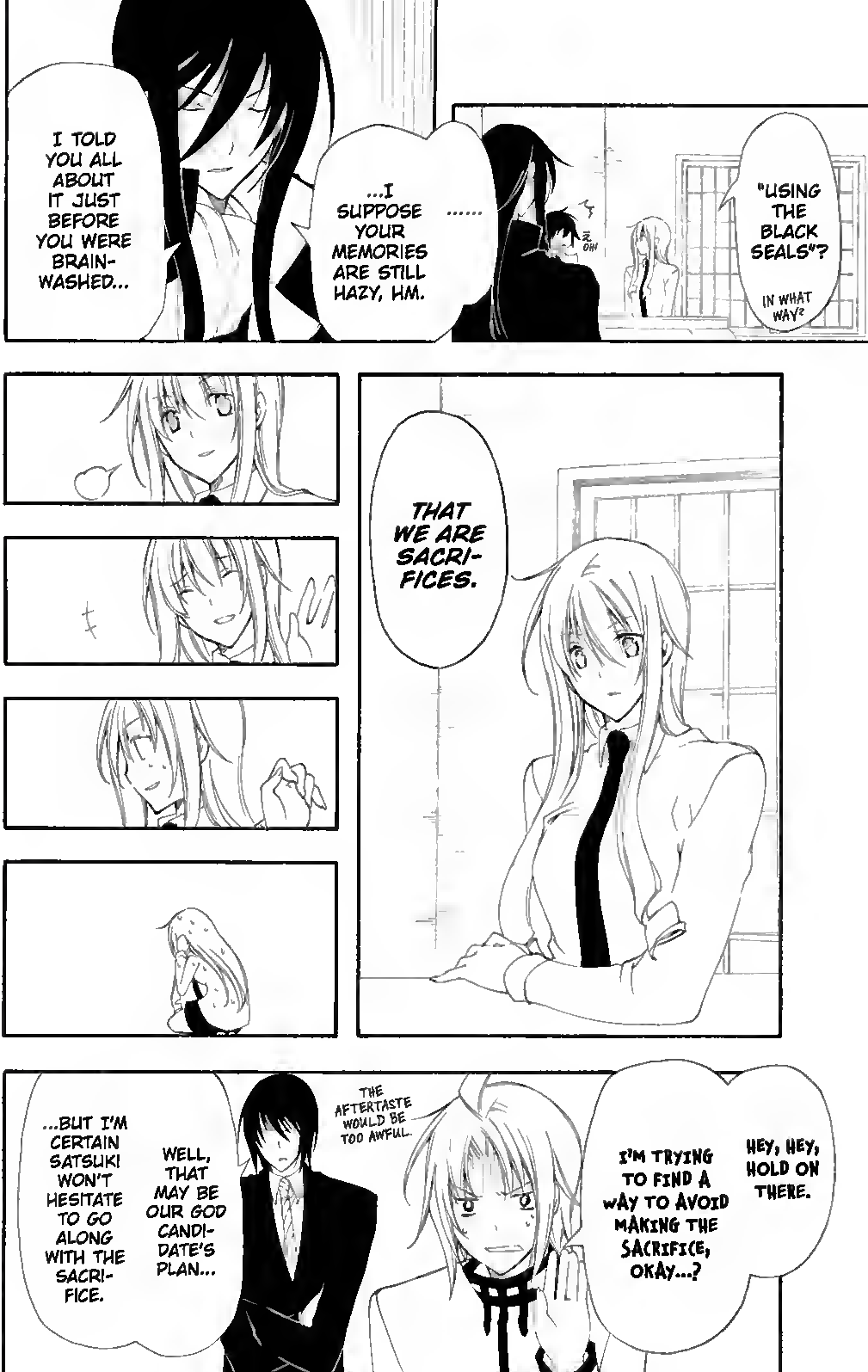

THOSE GREEDY, AMBITIOUS HYENAS...
...WITH THAT MUCH POWER IN HAND...
...THERE IS NO QUESTION THEY WILL MAKE SOME SORT OF MOVE.

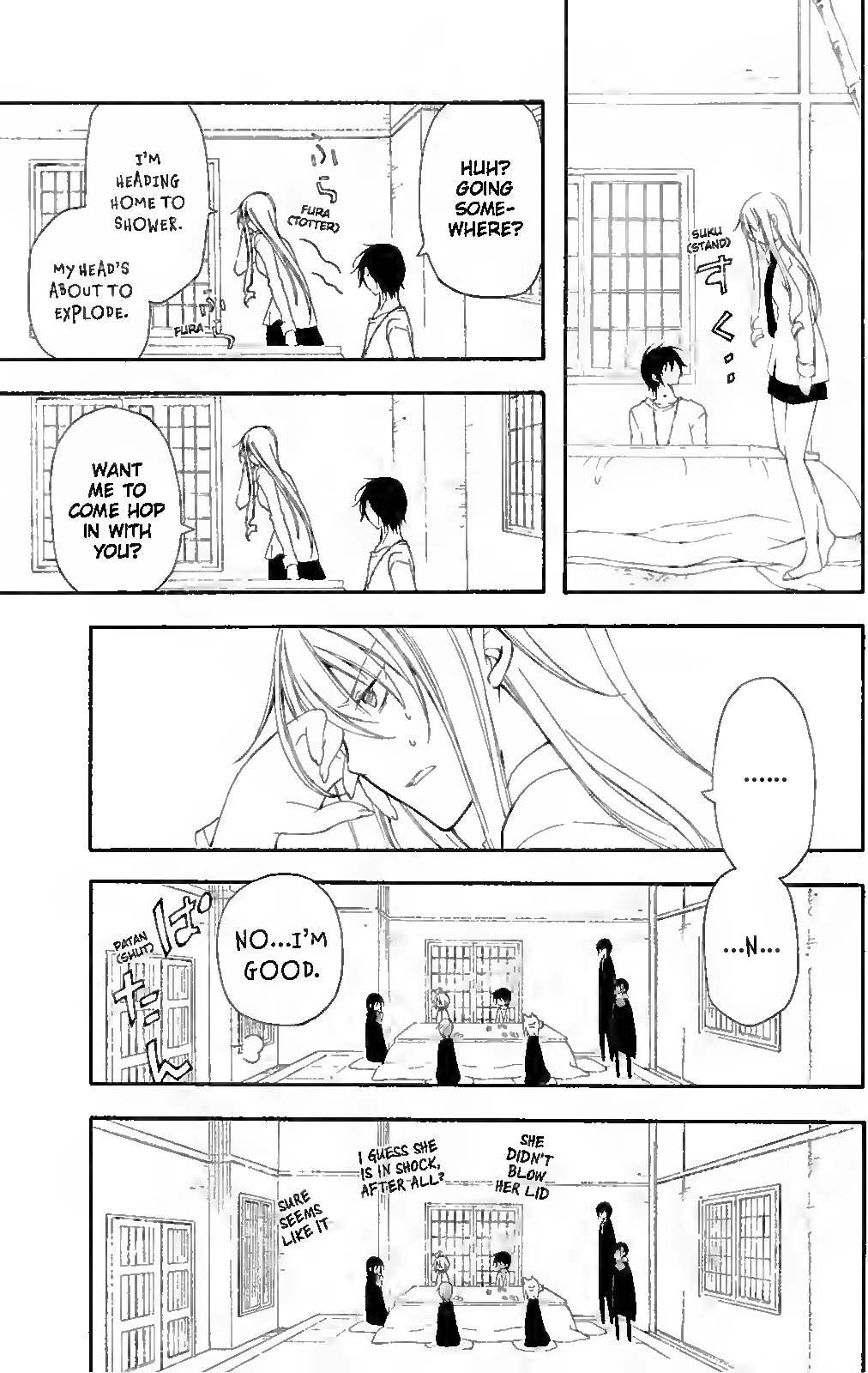
ARCANA'S SPLIT WITH BOTH SATSUKI... AND TSUZUKI...
...BUT IF THEY DO JOIN THE CRUSADE, THEY'LL LIKELY LEECH OFF OF SATSUKI.
I THINK WE DEFINITELY NEED TO KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON THEM.

TSUZUKI ISN'T AS STRONG AS SATSUKI...
I WIN
...BUT ALLIED WITH KAMU-HABURI, HE MIGHT SURPASS HIM.


TSUZUKI, SATSUKI, ARCANA... SO THREE PLAYERS RIGHT NOW.
MM

EVEN IF ARCANA REUNITES WITH SATSUKI, WE HAVE BOTH OF THE BLACK SEALS NEEDED FOR THE CRUSADES' ENDGAME.
SO WE OUGHTA HAVE THE UPPER HAND.
GRR R!
THE QUESTION OF USING THE BLACK SEALS ASIDE.
PERHAPS, BUT IF EITHER OF THESE CRITICAL TRUMP CARDS FELL INTO SATSUKI'S HANDS...
PEI (FWP)
...THE RESULTS WOULD BE DISAS-TROUS.

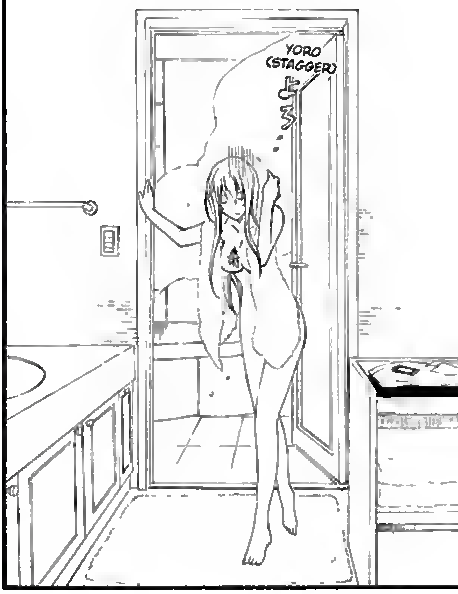

I TOLD YOU ALL ABOUT IT JUST BEFORE YOU WERE BRAIN-WASHED...
...I SUPPOSE YOUR MEMORIES ARE STILL HAZY, HM.
.....
"USING THE BLACK SEALS"?
IN WHAT WAY?
THAT WE ARE SACRI-FICES.
HEY, HEY, HOLD ON THERE.
I'M TRYING TO FIND A WAY TO AVOID MAKING THE SACRIFICE, OKAY...?
THE AFTERTASTE WOULD BE TOO AWFUL.
WELL, THAT MAY BE OUR GOD CANDI-DATE'S PLAN...
...BUT I'M CERTAIN SATSUKI WON'T HESITATE TO GO ALONG WITH THE SACRI-FICE.

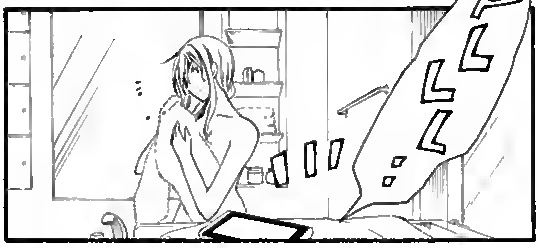

I'M HEADING HOME TO SHOWER.
MY HEAD'S ABOUT TO EXPLODE.
FURA (TOTTER)
FURA
HUH? GOING SOME-WHERE?
SUKU (STAND)
WANT ME TO COME HOP IN WITH YOU?
.....
...N...
PATAN (SHUT)
NO...I'M GOOD.
I GUESS SHE IS IN SHOCK, AFTER ALL?
SHE DIDN'T BLOW HER LID
SURE SEEMS LIKE IT

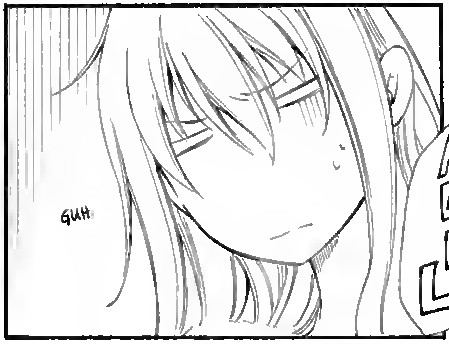
ZAAAAA
GSHHHHD
...I...
"THIS BRAND IS THE BLACK MARK."
I RE-MEMBER NOW!

IT IS THE SIGN DENOTING ONE WHOSE BLOOD MUST BE SPILLED BY THE GOD CANDIDATE AT THE END OF THE CRUSADE.
ONLY AFTER ONE OF US DIES...
...WILL THE WINNING CANDIDATE BECOME GOD.
.....!
BEING KAMUHABURI, I'VE LONG BEEN RESIGNED TO THE POSSIBILITY OF LOSING MY LIFE...
...BUT I DOUBT YOU'RE FEELING AS AMENABLE TO THE PROSPECT.
AND I KNOW IT WILL WEIGH HEAVILY ON YOUR MIND.
YES, LORD TOKIWA?
TON (PAT)
...RIDO.
LET'S SHUT OFF HER AWARE-NESS...
SU (SHFF)
...SO THAT SHE DOES NOT SUFFER.
GACHA (KCHAK)

I'VE WORKED SO HARD TO STAY ALIVE, AND IT SEEMS LIKE EVERYTHING IS CONSPIRING TO SEE ME DEAD!
THIS... THIS IS INSANE...

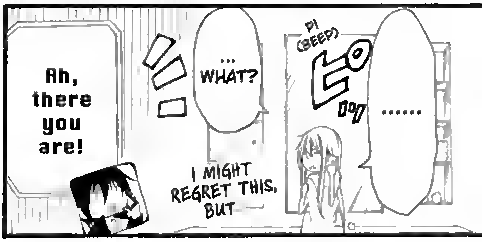

YORO (STAGGER)

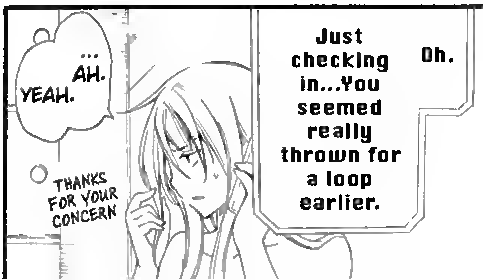

PLLL...


GUH
PLLL

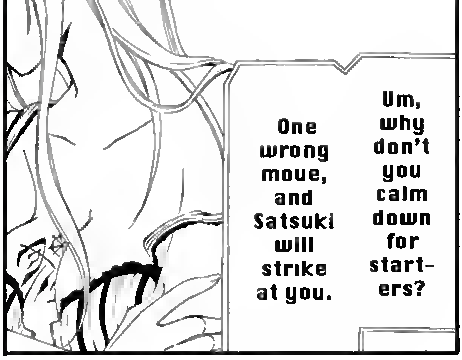
HINATA
CALL
XXX-XXXX-XXXX
PLL...

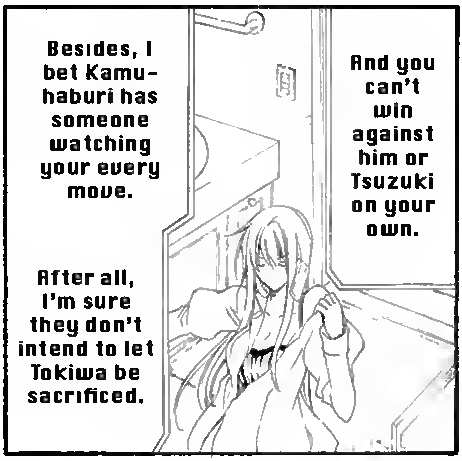
RIGHT NOW...
...I'M DEBATING MY OPTIONS: DO I RUN SOME-WHERE FAR AWAY WHILE PEOPLE'S GUARDS ARE DOWN...
...OR DO I JUST ASSAS-SINATE TSUZUKI AND SATSUKI BOTH.
... Whoa.

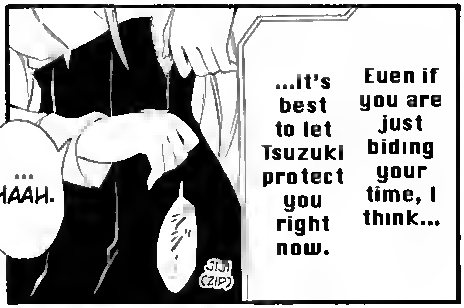

Ah, there you are!
... WHAT?
PI (BEEP)
I MIGHT REGRET THIS, BUT
.....


... AH. YEAH.
THANKS FOR YOUR CONCERN
Just checking in...You seemed really thrown for a loop earlier.
Oh.

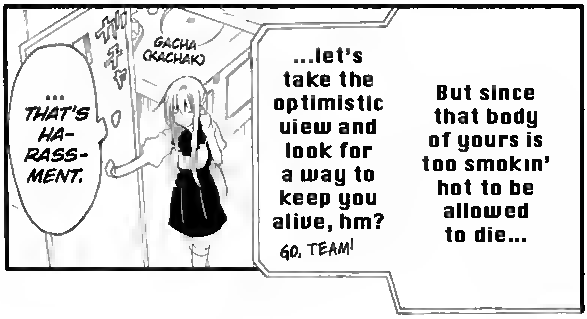
...SO I'M STUCK BEING ON THE DEFEN-SIVE.
THIS IS MAKING ME DIZZY.
That sounds about right.


Um, why don't you calm down for start-ers?
One wrong moue, and Satsuki will strike at you.


Besides, I bet Kamu-haburi has someone watching your every move.
And you can't win against him or Tsuzuki on your own.
After all, I'm sure they don't intend to let Tokiwa be sacrificed.

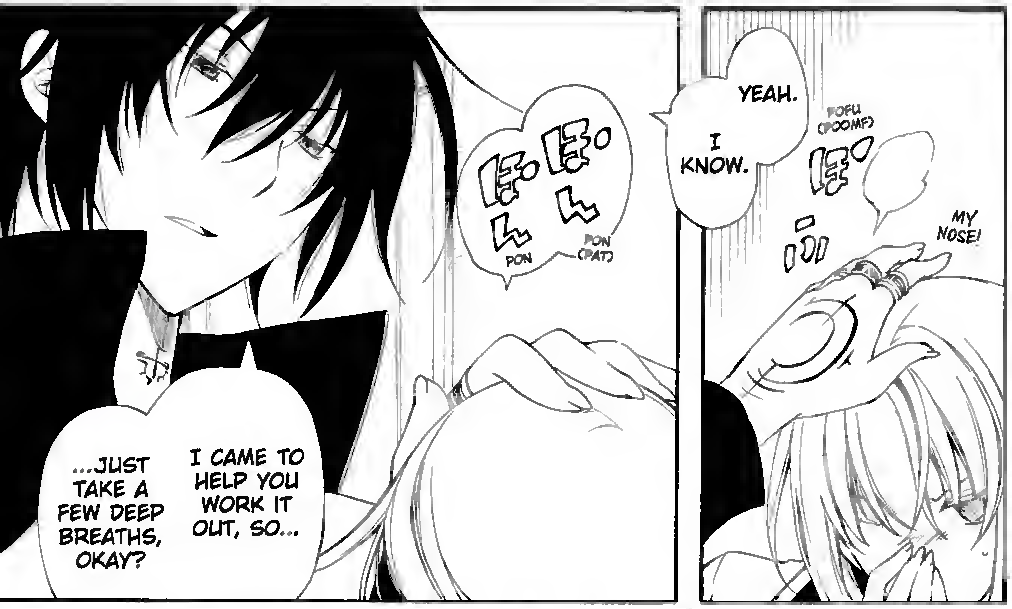

...
HAAH.
SIGH (ZIP)
...It's best to let Tsuzuki protect you right now.
Euen if you are just biding your time, I think...

I'M HANGING UP NOW. I NEED TO THINK.


GACHA (KACHAK)
...
THAT'S HA-RASS-MENT.
...let's take the optimistic uiew and look for a way to keep you alive, hm?
GO, TEAM!
But since that body of yours is too smokin' hot to be allowed to die...

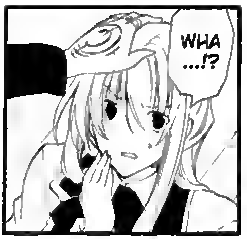
LATER...
ピッ (BEEP)
ピッ
ゴロ (WHAP)
KURU (SPIN)
SORRY, BUT...
...I...
...REALLY NEED TIME ALONE TO DO SOME SERIOUS THINKING ...
TSUKA
TSUKA (STOMP)
TSUKA
OH. THAT YOUR OLD OUTFIT?
NICE. I LIKE THOSE CLOTHES.
SEE, WHEN I STRIP 'EM OFF—
AWW, SO COLD.
GO HOME!

UNH!
BOFU (BWOOF)


...JUST TAKE A FEW DEEP BREATHS, OKAY?
I CAME TO HELP YOU WORK IT OUT, SO...
PON
PON (PAT)
YEAH. I KNOW.
BOFU (POOMF)
MY NOSE!

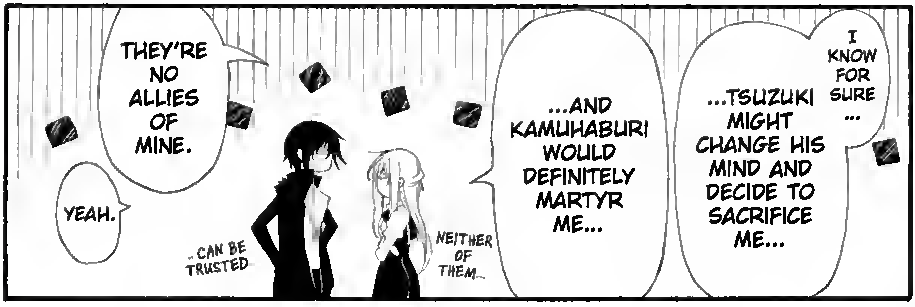
IS THIS AN EFFECT OF THE CONDI-TIONING? TOO WEIRD
DAMMIT, I SO WANNA PUNCH OD IN THE FACE
BUT I MEAN, WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THIS SACRIFICE THING?
DAMMIT, HINATA, YOU'RE JUST SO...
JUST GIMME A MINUTE. I'LL CALM DOWN IN A SEC.
NOW, NOW.

じわ
JIWA (TEARY)

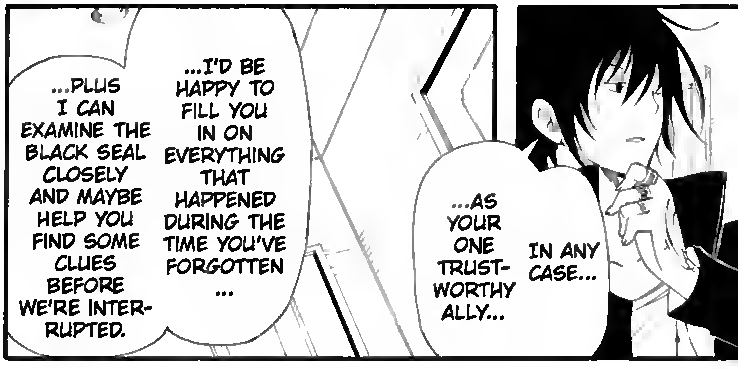

WHA...!?

NN
...ALLY... HUH.
WELL ...

WE'VE GOT HISTORY, SO YOU CAN COUNT ON ME AS YOUR ALLY.
...NOW, WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?


THEY'RE NO ALLIES OF MINE.
YEAH.
...CAN BE TRUSTED
NEITHER OF THEM...
...AND KAMUHABURI WOULD DEFINITELY MARTYR ME...
...TSUZUKI MIGHT CHANGE HIS MIND AND DECIDE TO SACRIFICE ME...
I KNOW FOR SURE ...

...I CAN SLEEP WITH YOU AND HELP YOU DRESS TOO.
OH, AND...
EVEN WASH YOUR BACK.
SERVICE~
SERVICE~

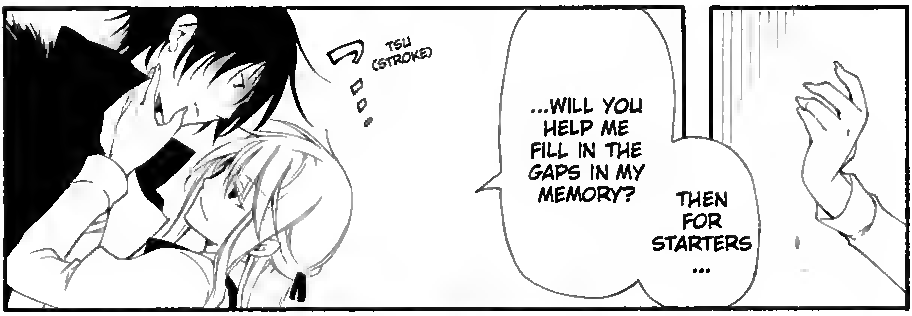

...PLUS I CAN EXAMINE THE BLACK SEAL CLOSELY AND MAYBE HELP YOU FIND SOME CLUES BEFORE WE'RE INTERRUPTED.
...I'D BE HAPPY TO FILL YOU IN ON EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED DURING THE TIME YOU'VE FORGOTTEN ...
...AS YOUR ONE TRUSTWORTHY ALLY...
IN ANY CASE...

HOW UNCHARACTERISTICALLY SWEET OF YOU.
...GEE, THANKS.

SO MUCH SO...
...I ASSUME YOU'VE GOT SOME ULTERIOR MOTIVE, RIGHT?

HM.
...I SEE.
VERY WELL.
THAT'S AT LEAST MORE BELIEVABLE THAN YOU OFFERING TO HELP FOR FREE.

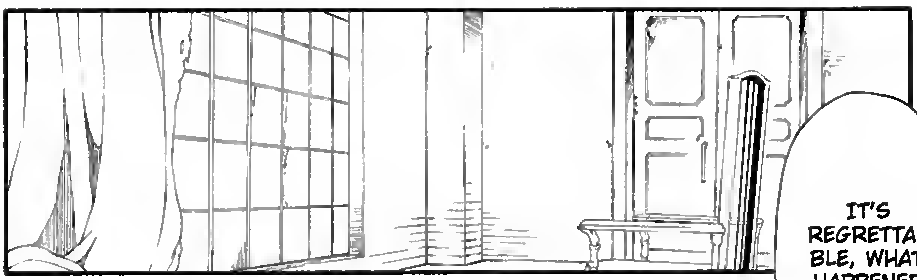
WELL.
NIKO (GRIN)
BUT OF COURSE, M'DEAR.


TSU (STROKE)
...WILL YOU HELP ME FILL IN THE GAPS IN MY MEMORY?
THEN FOR STARTERS ...

THANKS TO YOU...
...I'VE REALIZED THAT GETTING UPSET WON'T GET ME ANY-WHERE.

FINISHED FREAKING OUT?

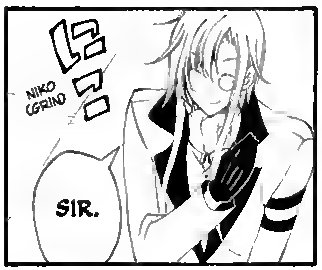
I'M GOING TO GET RID OF THIS BRAND AND SURVIVE.

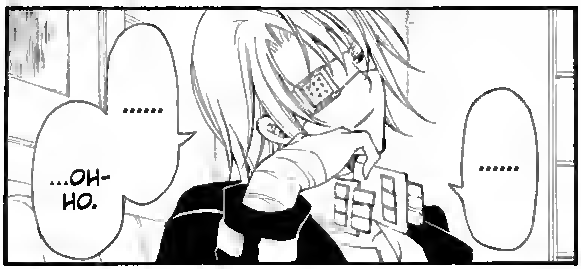

IT'S REGRETTABLE, WHAT HAPPENED TO KANADE.

I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR EXCUSES.
I RUSHED OVER TO HELP HER AS SOON AS I HEARD...
...BUT IT TOOK TOO LONG TO INFILTRATE THE ESTATE...

PERHAPS TSUZUKI'S NEW ALLIANCE WITH KAMUHABURI TROUBLES YOU?
...AHH.
MY. YOU SEEM TO BE IN A FOUL MOOD.
WHO CAN SAY?
...MISS MARI-ANNE.
I WONDER WHAT HAS GOT OUR NEW MASTER ANGRY...
...EVEN WITHOUT LADY KANADE'S WIT.
...HAVE UTMOST CONFIDENCE I CAN BE OF USE TO YOU...
I, RIDO...
...IF SO, PLEASE BE AT EASE, SIR.
...SO WHAT?
FOR THERE IS NO OTHER IN KAMU-HABURI AS KNOWL-EDGEABLE ABOUT BRAIN-WASHING AS I!
OR ABOUT DISSECTION EITHER, FOR THAT MATTER!
BRAIN CTA-DAAD
AHH!
PACHI (CLAP)
PACHI
...TO UNDO THE CONDI-TIONING I PERFORMED ON LADY TSUKIMIYA, THE OTHER BLACK SEAL BEARER.
...I SUSPECT THEY USED THE DATA I LEFT BEHIND...
MEAN-ING...

IF SO...
...LADY TSUKIMIYA'S PROGRAMMING...
...HAS NOT YET BEEN COMPLETELY UNRAVELED.


NIKO
SIR.

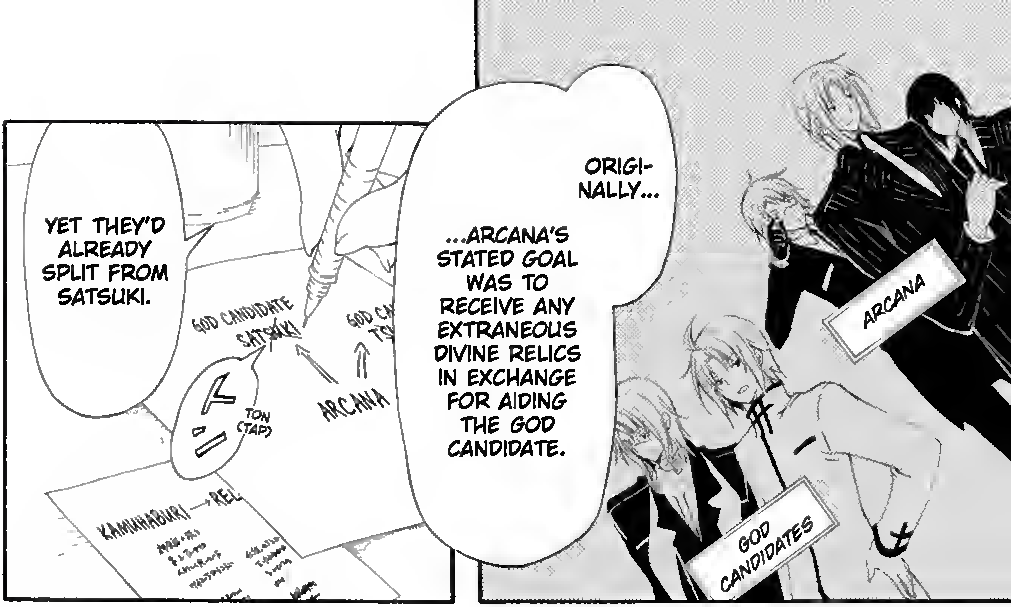

.....
...OH-HO.
.....

DESPITE APPEARANCES...
...I AM QUITE A DEVOTED MANSERVANT, LORD SATSUKI.

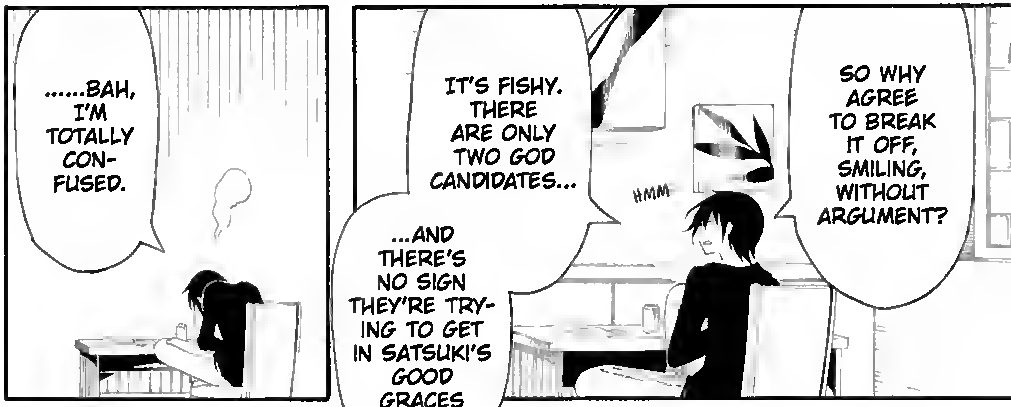
BLOODY CROSS

BLOODY CROSS

Chapter 51
He Who Has Served Long

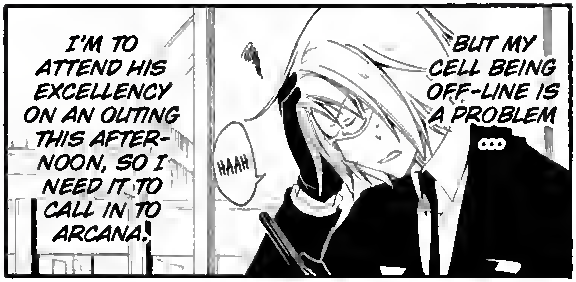

ORIGI-
NALLY...
...ARCANA'S STATED GOAL WAS TO RECEIVE ANY EXTRANEOUS DIVINE RELICS IN EXCHANGE FOR AIDING THE GOD CANDIDATE.
ARCANA
GOD CANDIDATES
YET THEY'D ALREADY SPLIT FROM SATSUKI.
GOD CANDIDATE SATSUKI
ARCANA
TON (TAP)

SO MAIN-
TAINING
THEIR
ALLIANCE
WITH
TSUZUKI...
...OUGHT TO
HAVE BEEN
CRITICAL
TO THEIR
ONGOING
EFFORTS...


SO WHY
AGREE
TO BREAK
IT OFF,
SMILING,
WITHOUT
ARGUMENT?
HMM
IT'S FISHY.
THERE
ARE ONLY
TWO GOD
CANDIDATES...
...AND
THERE'S
NO SIGN
THEY'RE TRY-
ING TO GET
IN SATSUKI'S
GOOD
GRACES
AGAIN.
.....BAH,
I'M
TOTALLY
CON-
FUSED.

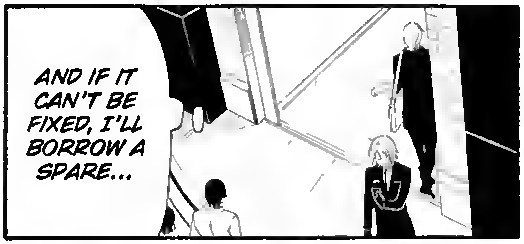
SPECULATING WILL ONLY GET ME SO FAR. I NEED MORE INFORMATION...
POI (TOSS)
...BUT MAKINO'S STOPPED TAKING MY CALLS...
YOU'RE MY ENEMY NOW! DON'T CALL SO CASUALLY! I AIN'T LEAKING ANY INTEL!
MM.
GISHI (CREAK)
I'LL JUST KIDNAP MAKINO.
THAT COULD WORK.
...AHH.

MAKINO, AIDE TO THE DIRECTOR OF ARCANA, IS BAFFLED.

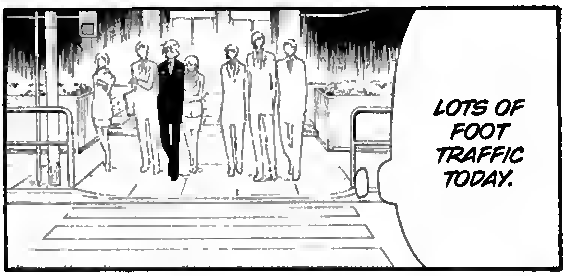

I'M TO ATTEND HIS EXCELLENCY ON AN OUTING THIS AFTER-NOON, SO I NEED IT TO CALL IN TO ARCANA.
HAAH
BUT MY CELL BEING OFF-LINE IS A PROBLEM

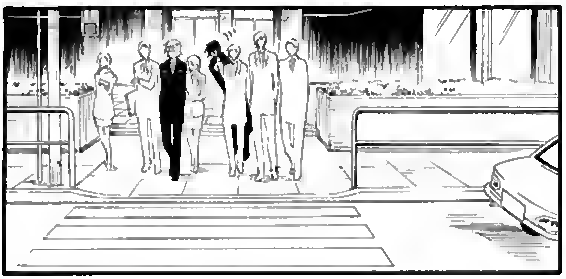
DON
(BUMP)
OH,
SORRY.

GATA
(CLATTER)
I'LL JUST HAVE A NEARBY STORE DO A QUICK REPAIR.
BUT TECH'S PROBABLY OUT ON THEIR LUNCH BREAK TOO.


AND IF IT CAN'T BE FIXED, I'LL BORROW A SPARE...

GA
(GRAB)

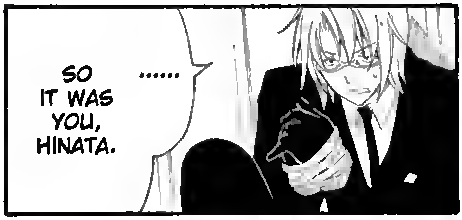

LOTS OF FOOT TRAFFIC TODAY.



CAPTURED

YO.
THANKS FOR WANDERING OUT WITH YOUR HEAD IN THE CLOUDS, MAKINO-KUN.
GH...

GO (WHUMP)


SO IT WAS YOU, HINATA.
.....

YEAH, I KNOW, I KNOW.
I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF DOING SOMETHING IMPORTANT, YOU KNOW—
C'MON, C'MON...
GAA (RAWR)
YOU CAN'T JUST CALL ME UP LIKE IT'S NOTHING!
I TOLD YOU ON THE PHONE LAST TIME! WE'RE ENEMIES!

HERE, IT'S FIXED.
THERE, THERE, AND THERE.
POCHI (BIP)
POCHI
WHA ...!?

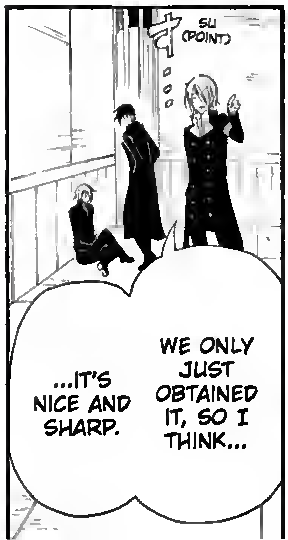
ZUI (SHOVE)
!!
YOU WANNA GO GET THIS REPAIRED, RIGHT, MAKINO-KUN?

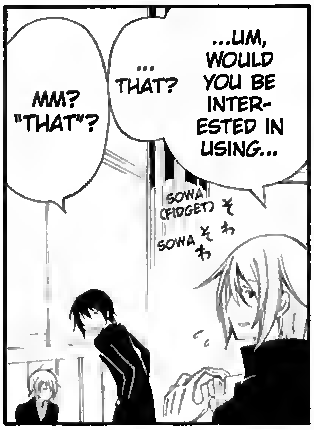
HEY... DID YOU MESS WITH MY CELL WHILE YOU WERE AT ARCANA!?
HEH HEH.
JITO (GLARE)
WELL... YOUR GUARD SURE WAS LAX BACK THEN.
YOU CAN HAVE IT BACK
BASTARD.....
TCH.
...WHERE THE HECK AM I, ANYWAY?
IT DIDN'T SEEM LIKE WE SPENT THAT MUCH TIME IN TRANSIT, BUT...
WHEW, FINALLY DONE!
IT CLEANED UP PRETTY WELL, DIDN'T IT.
GACHA (KCHAK)
HM? A VISITOR?
ACK! KAMUHA-BURI...!!
YUP. THE ARCANA DIREC-TOR'S AIDE.

TO (THMP)
I WAS JUST ABOUT TO ASK HIM WHY ARCANA DECIDED IT WAS OKAY TO DUMP...
...THE GOD CANDI-DATES.
.....

FOR INTERRO-GATION?
YUP.
BINGO.
BI (2WIP)

I FIGURED HIS AIDE OUGHTA KNOW SOMETHING.
THAT SCHEMING BOSS OF YOURS WOULDN'T PUT HIMSELF AT A DISADVANTAGE WILLINGLY WITHOUT REASON.


SU (POINT)
...IT'S NICE AND SHARP.
WE ONLY JUST OBTAINED IT, SO I THINK...

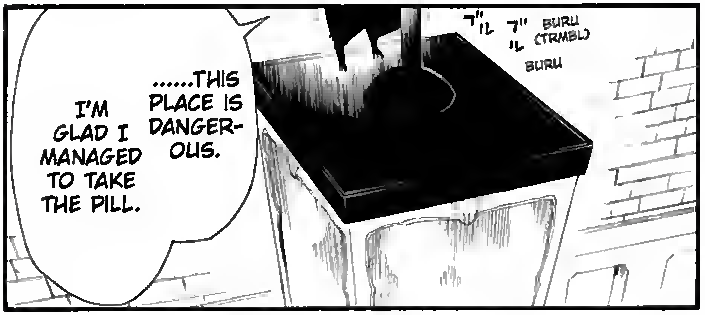

MM? "THAT"?
... THAT?
...UM, WOULD YOU BE INTER-ESTED IN USING...
SOWA (FIDGET)
SOWA

...I'M NOT SAYING ANY-THING.
PUI (SNUB)
WE CAN'T HAVE THAT, NOW CAN WE.

(GLARE)
PLEASE REMOVE THE BODY RIGHT AFTER-WARD, OKAY?
AIEEEE...!!
SEE... FLESH AND BLOOD GETS HARDER TO WASH OFF AS TIME PASSES.
THE IRON MAIDEN. AN INSTRUMENT OF TORTURE FROM MEDIEVAL EUROPE. PUTTING A HUMAN INSIDE AND CLOSING THE LID RESULTS IN IMPALEMENT AND DEATH.
AIR-DRYING
THE IRON MAIDEN
HE'D DIE.
KAMU-HABURI USES STUFF LIKE THAT FOR INTERRO-GATIONS?
HUH? OH NO, THIS IS JUST A COLLECT-IBLE.
TOKIWA-SAN AND ICHIKAWA-SAN PICKED IT UP SOME-WHERE.
IT HASN'T BEEN USED YET...
SO KIKUSAKA'S KIDDING (I THINK).
.....UH, WHERE'S THE ARCANA GUY?

MA-KINO!
HM...HE'S NOT HERE EITHER.
IS HE HIDING SOME-WHERE?
BATA
BATA
BATA
BATA

BATA (STOMP)
BATA
BATA


I'M GLAD I MANAGED TO TAKE THE PILL.
.....THIS PLACE IS DANGER-OUS.
BURU (TRMBL)
BURU

IT TEM-PORARILY FREES MY DEMON BLOOD...
...WHICH IS NOR-MALLY KEPT AT HUMAN PARAME-TERS...
CHURI (CHACKA)

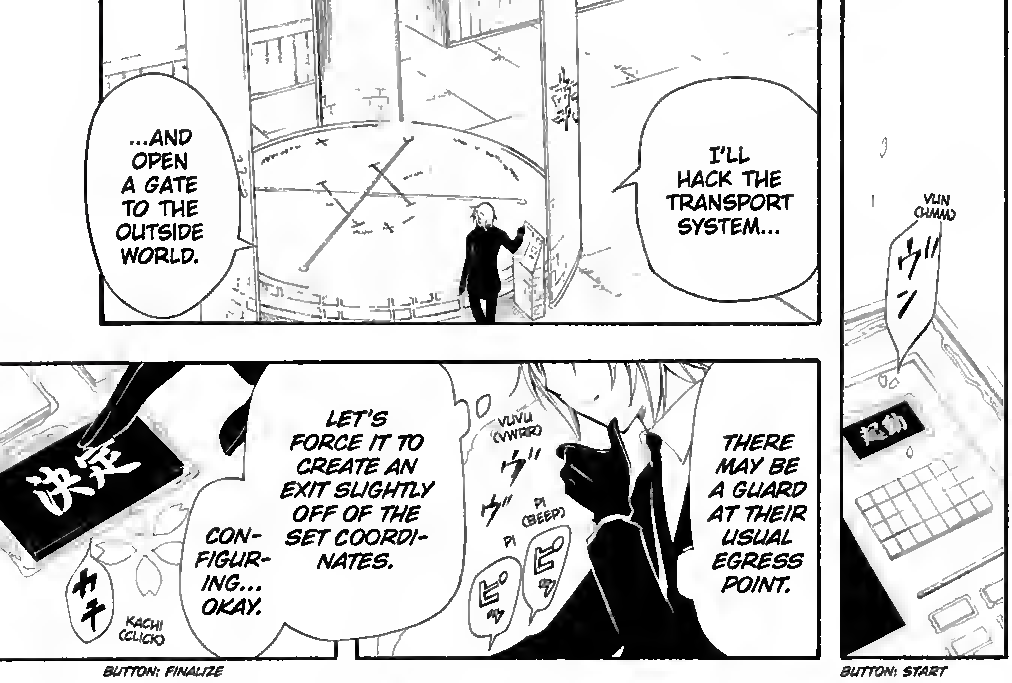
BOFUN (POOF)

NOW, THEN...
I HAVE TO FIND THE EXIT WHILE MY SENSE OF SMELL IS ENHANCED BY THE PILL.
KUN (SNIFF)
...ALLEGEDLY, I CAN'T MAKE CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WHILE WITHIN KAMUHABURI SPACE...
SU (SHF)
...BUT I'LL SEND AN SOS SIGNAL TO ARCANA ANYWAY.
KACHI (CLICK)
HOPE IT REACHES THEM IN TIME FOR THEM TO SEND HELP.
PHEW ...
OKAY! ALL THAT'S LEFT IS TO FIND THAT EXIT...
TA (TMP)
TA
AH.

I HEAR ...
...YOU WERE KIDNAPPED BY HINATA? WHAT A DUNCE.
MY CONDO-LENCES.
ZURI (DRAG)
ZURI
UNNH ...
SHIKU SHIKU SHIKU (SOB)
GASH! (SNATCH)
HEY, HEY, HEY!
DA (DASH)
GOODNESS, WHAT A LOUSY FIB.
HOW EMBAR-RASSING
O-OF COURSE WE'RE NOT HIDING ANYTHING!
SO?
ARCANA'S GOT SOME INTEL THEY DON'T WANT US KNOWING?
I SHOULDA JUST TOSSED HIM INTO IT!
IT'S 'COS YOU FREAKED HIM OUT!
DON (SHOVE)
...QUICK, HIDE!

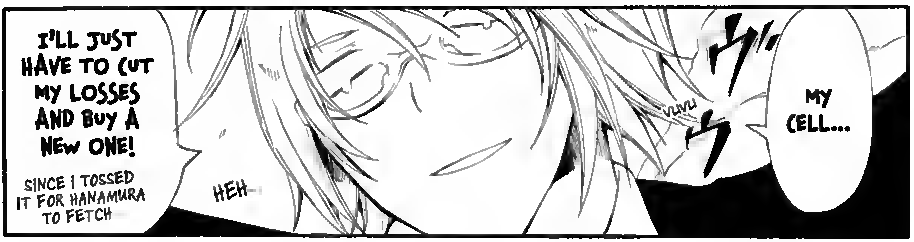
GACHA (KACHAK)
HAVE THEY LEFT?
THEY'VE GONE.
WH-WHY DID YOU HIDE ME?
HUH? 'COS IT SEEMED FUN? LIKE PLAYING SPY?
OH RIGHT, I FORGOT HE'S A BIT DIM-WITTED
BY THE WAY...
KUN (SNIFF)
...SOME-HOW YOU'VE PICKED UP THE SCENT OF A DEMON...
KUN
KUN
DOG.
GEH...!!
ARE YOU ACTUALLY DEMON-FOLK?

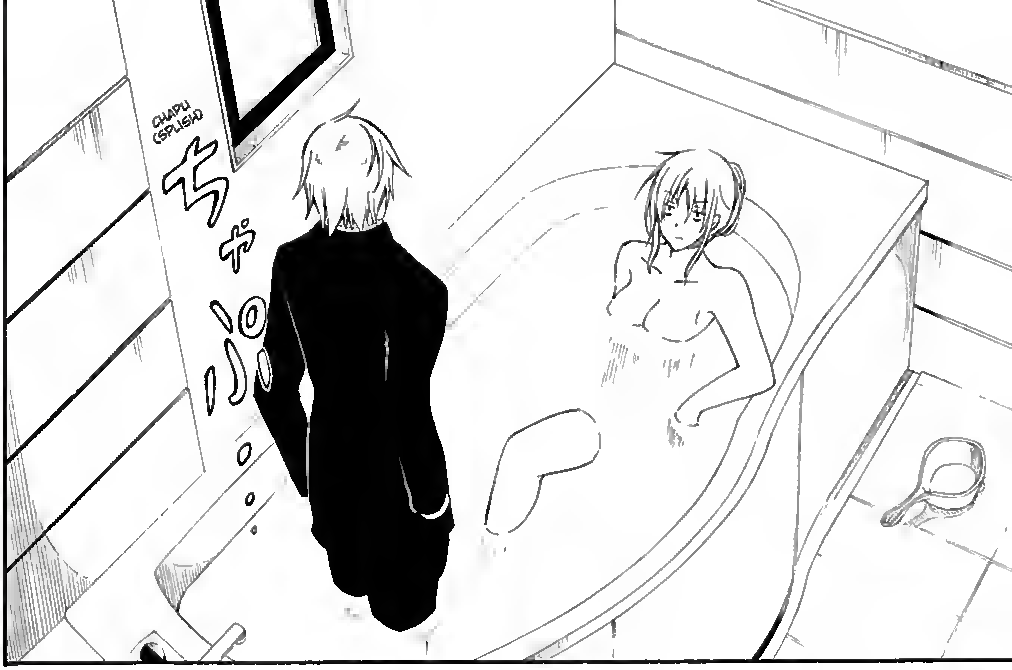
OH! HE'S RUNNING AWAY!
BYU (ZOOM)
NIKO (GRIN)
UH ..... UM...
ARGH, DAMN YOU, MY ANIMAL INSTINCTS!
GO FETCH!!
BUN (THROW)
SHUBA (LEAP)
SHUBA
CELL
AIEE!
DA (DASH) DA DA DA
KATSU
KATSU (TAK)
KATSU
...YOU!
DAMMIT!
YOU'RE SMELLING THE BARBECUED MEAT I ATE FOR LUNCH!!
DA DA DA
KATSU KATSU
ISN'T RUNNING PROOF OF YOUR GUILT?
OH! THE EXIT!
PETA (FLOP)
... WHEW.

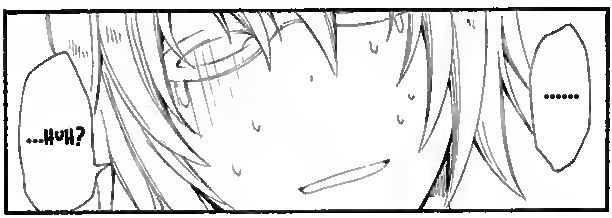

...AND OPEN A GATE TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD.
I'LL HACK THE TRANSPORT SYSTEM...
VUN CHMMO
決定
KACHI CCLICK
CON-FIGUR-ING... OKAY.
LET'S FORCE IT TO CREATE AN EXIT SLIGHTLY OFF OF THE SET COORDI-NATES.
VUVU (VVWRR)
PI (BEEP)
PI
THERE MAY BE A GUARD AT THEIR USUAL EGRESS POINT.

BUTTON: FINALIZE

BUTTON: START

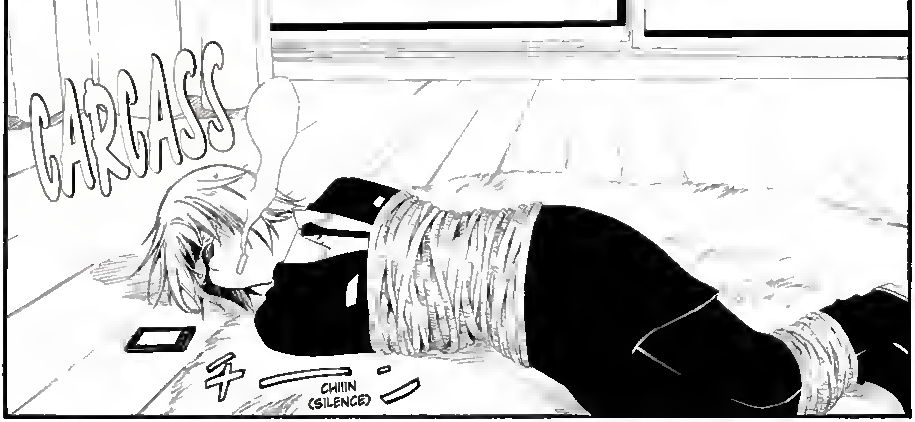



CHAPU (SPLISH)
ちゃぷ。。。


.....
...HUH?

OH MY...
SU (SHP)
す。。

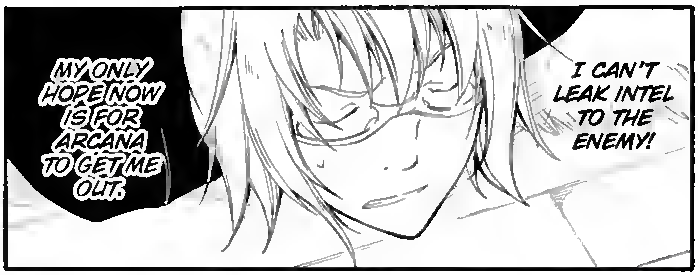
BAKI (KRAKK)
GA (THK)
GUSHA (SMASH)
DOGO (THWUD)
GO (WHACK)


CARCASS
CHIIIN (SILENCE)

LIKE I'VE BEEN SAYING—HURRY UP AND TALK!
WELL IN ANY CASE, ONCE HE SPILLS ON ARCANA, HE CAN GO HOME.
TODAY'S BEEN ALL BAD LUCK. I SHOULDN'T HAVE BOTHERED TRYING TO FIX MY PHONE.
UNNH
HIS CELL, RETURNED COURTESY OF HINATA

WE FINALLY CAUGHT HIM.
ER, BUT WHY'S HE AT TSUKIMI-YA'S?
SORRY TO IN-TRUDE

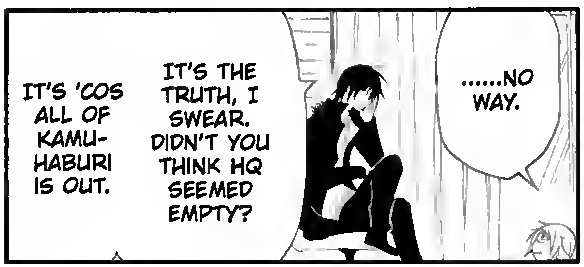
OH.
BY THE WAY...


I CAN'T LEAK INTEL TO THE ENEMY!
MY ONLY HOPE NOW IS FOR ARCANA TO GET ME OUT.

THIS IS AN ORDINARY APARTMENT, NOT A DIFFERENT DIMENSION.
SO AS LONG AS THEY PICK UP THE SIGNAL THIS HAS BEEN EMITTING...

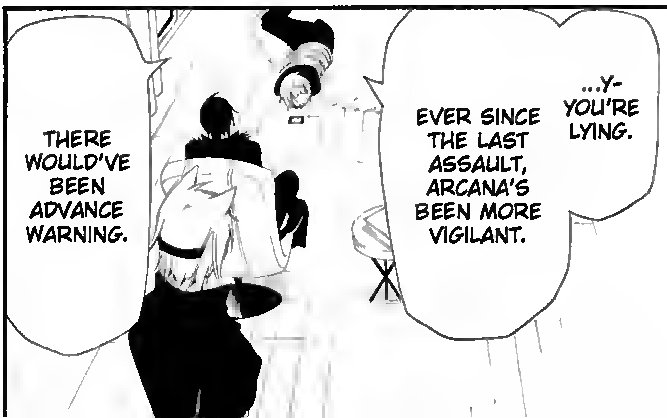
...IF YOU'RE WAITING FOR RESCUE, IT'S NO USE.

I DOUBT THEY'VE GOT THE RESOURCES TO COME LIBERATE YOU.
AR-CANA'S ...
...UNDER ATTACK BY KAMU-HABURI RIGHT NOW.


IT'S 'COS ALL OF KAMU-HABURI IS OUT.
IT'S THE TRUTH, I SWEAR. DIDN'T YOU THINK HQ SEEMED EMPTY?
.....NO WAY.

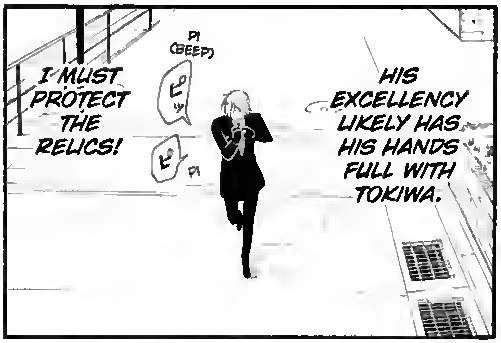
HUH ...!?

OH, REALLY?


THERE WOULD'VE BEEN ADVANCE WARNING.
EVER SINCE THE LAST ASSAULT, ARCANA'S BEEN MORE VIGILANT.
...Y-YOU'RE LYING.

...WERE TOLD TO MAKE SURE YOU WOULDN'T GET IN THE WAY.
BUT...THE RAID WAS LAUNCHED JUST AS YOU WERE EXITING YOUR BUILDING.
DIDN'T YOU NOTICE?
AND WE, THE STANDBY SQUAD...
PUCHI (SNAP)
PUCHI (POP)
I...I'M LEAVING.
HAA
SORRY TO HAVE BOTH-ERED YOU.

WHY ME!?
TO (TMP)
HINATA! YOU OWE ME!

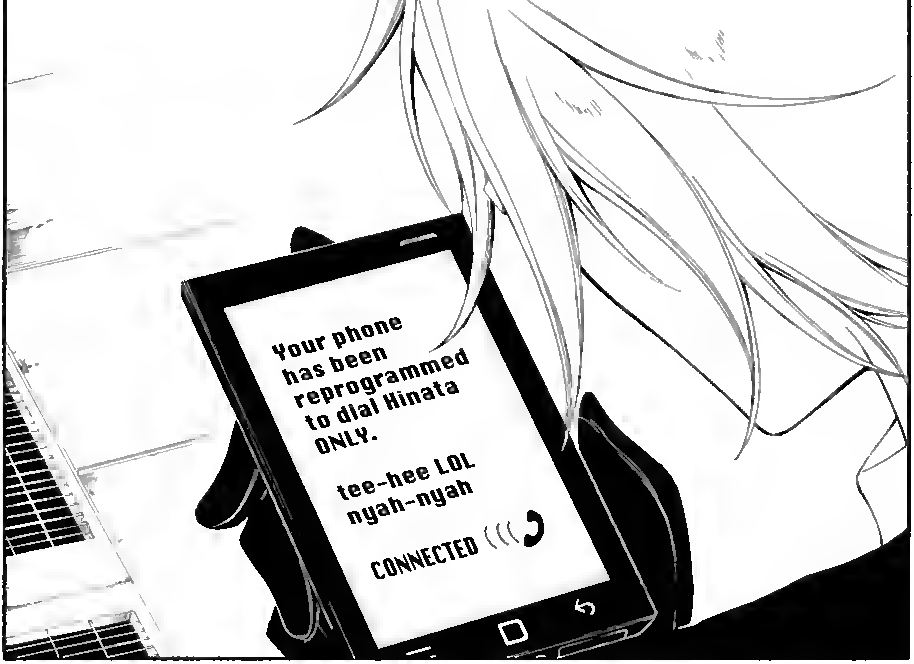

I MUST PROTECT THE RELICS!
PI (BEEP)
PI
HIS EXCELLENCY LIKELY HAS HIS HANDS FULL WITH TOKIWA.

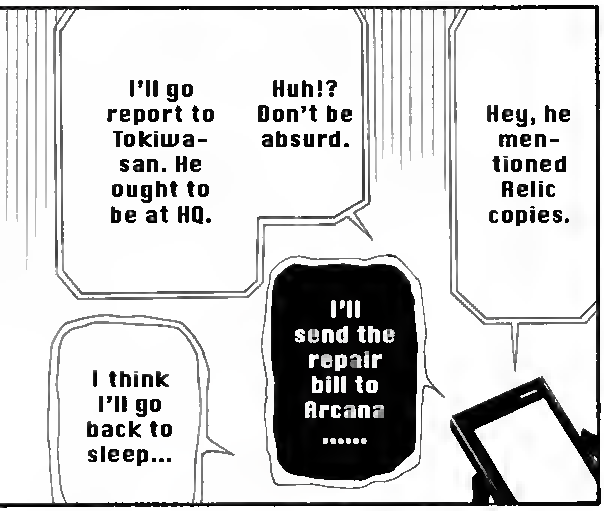
MY WIN-DOW !!!
GASHAN (KR ISH)

U-URGENT! SEAL OFF ALL ACCESS TO LAB-ORATORY NUMBER 5!!
HIDE THE RELIC COPIES FROM KAMU-HABURI!!

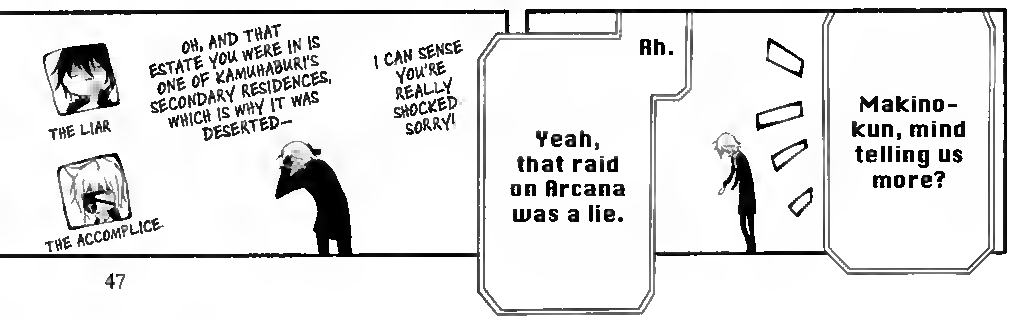
HEY! HELLO? HELLO—

...THERE'S NO ANSWER.

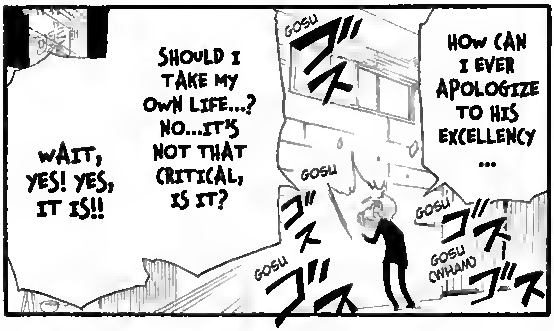

Your phone has been reprogrammed to dial Hinata ONLY.
tee-hee LOL nyah-nyah
CONNECTED


I'll go report to Tokiwa-san. He ought to be at HQ.
Huh!? Don't be absurd.
Hey, he mentioned Relic copies.
I'll send the repair bill to Arcana .....
I think I'll go back to sleep...

ヒロ
PISHAA (CRACKLE)
ニンヤァ


THE LIAR
THE ACCOMPLICE
OH, AND THAT ESTATE YOU WERE IN IS ONE OF KAMUHABURI'S SECONDARY RESIDENCES, WHICH IS WHY IT WAS DESERTED—
I CAN SENSE YOU'RE REALLY SHOCKED SORRY!
Ah.
Yeah, that raid on Arcana was a lie.
Makino-kun, mind telling us more?

I'M SUCH A FOOL!!!
SHOOT!! I FELL RIGHT INTO THEIR TRAP!!
SHOOT!
DA
DA (DASH)


WAIT, YES! YES, IT IS!!
SHOULD I TAKE MY OWN LIFE...? NO...IT'S NOT THAT CRITICAL, IS IT?
HOW CAN I EVER APOLOGIZE TO HIS EXCELLENCY ...
GOSU
GOSU ONHAMO

AAAH...! IS THERE NO WAY TO WIPE THEIR MEMORIES ...!?

WAAAAH!!!!

.....TH—
KATSU
KATSU

TH-TH-TH-TH-TH-TH-THOSE FOOT-STEPS...
KATSU

KATSU (TAP)

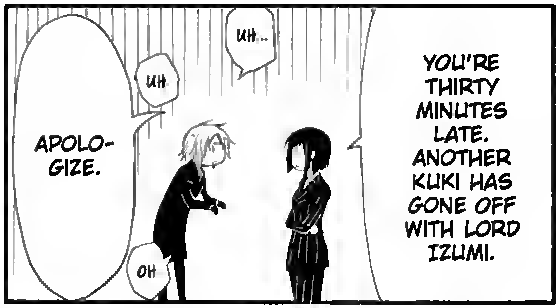
KATSU
カ
KATSU
カ
ﾛﾛﾝ

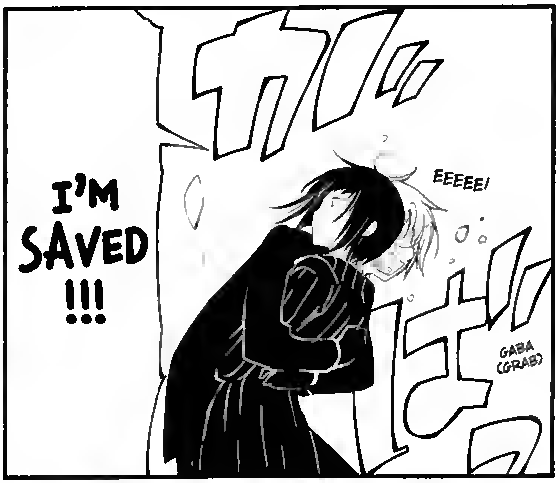
I'LL BE
DEVOURED!!
ARE YOU ACTUALLY DEMON-FULL?
HANA-MURA!!!

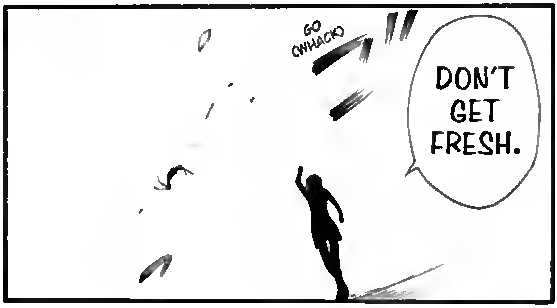
GA (GRAB)
DA (CRASH)
AIEEE! SOME-BODY...!
HELP M—!

HEY...! QUIT FLAILING AROUND AND MAKING A FUSS!!
PEOPLE WILL MIS-UNDER-STAND!
.....
.....
...HUH?
K-KUKI?
HUH...? WHERE'S HANA-MURA ?
WHAT? WHY'D YOU SHRIEK LIKE THAT?
WE RECEIVED YOUR SOS SIGNAL FIVE MINUTES AGO.
I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU.

ALWAYS CARRY TWO CELL PHONES IN CASE OF A MALFUNCTION. NEVER LOAN THEM OUT OR LET ANYONE TOUCH THEM; MAINTAIN HIGH SECURITY.
AND ANY CELL PHONES HINATA BECOMES AWARE OF, DISCARD IMMEDIATELY.
DOSHA (SPLAT)
MAKINO PLEDGED THIS TO HIMSELF.
YET HOW DO I APOLOGIZE TO...?


UH...
UH
APOLO-GIZE.
OH
YOU'RE THIRTY MINUTES LATE. ANOTHER KUKI HAS GONE OFF WITH LORD IZUMI.


I'M SAVED !!!
EEEEE!
GABA (GRAB)


GO ONWARD!
DON'T GET FRESH.

BLOODY CROSS

BLOODY CROSS

Chapter 52
The Past Yet Unseen

Chapter 52
The Past Yet Unseen

BLOODY CROSS

THE EMINENT LORD TSUZUKI

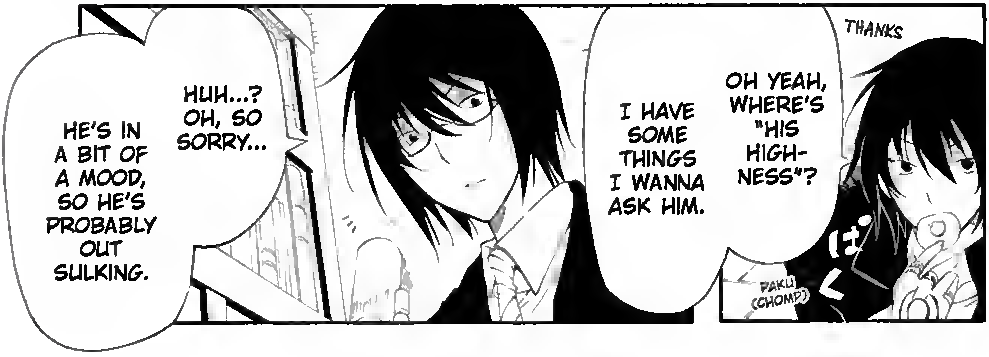
~THE CHRONICLES OF HIS GLORIOUS LIFE~

THAT ANGEL BASTARD... SUMMONING ME ON A DAY LIKE THIS.
SNIFFL!
UNNH... IT'S SO CHILLY TODAY.

IF HE HADN'T OFFERED TO PAY, I'D HAVE REFUSED.
YEESH.
COULD YOU COME OVER AND BOLSTER ITS SHIELDS?
MY HOUSE IS KNOWN TO ARCANA, AND NOW THAT WE AREN'T ALLIES ANYMORE, IT COULD BE AT RISK.

DO YOU THINK YOU CAN, THEN? FORTIFY THEM?
WE GREATLY APPRE-CIATE THIS.
GACHA GACHAKO
ガチャ
ガチャ

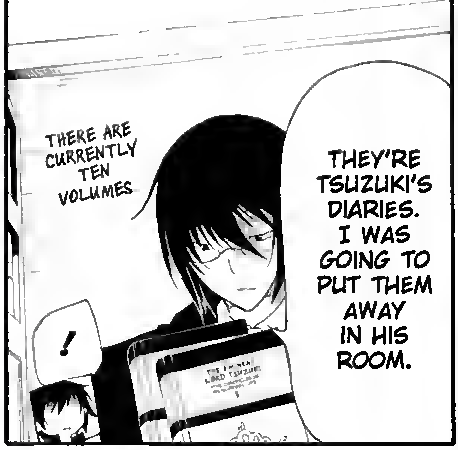
HUH.
BECAUSE IT'S BEEN MESSY LATELY.
I FIGURED I'D TIDY THINGS UP BEFORE IT GOT BUSY.
HAVE SOME TEA
YEAH... WELL, IT'S DOABLE ANYWAY... BUT WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?

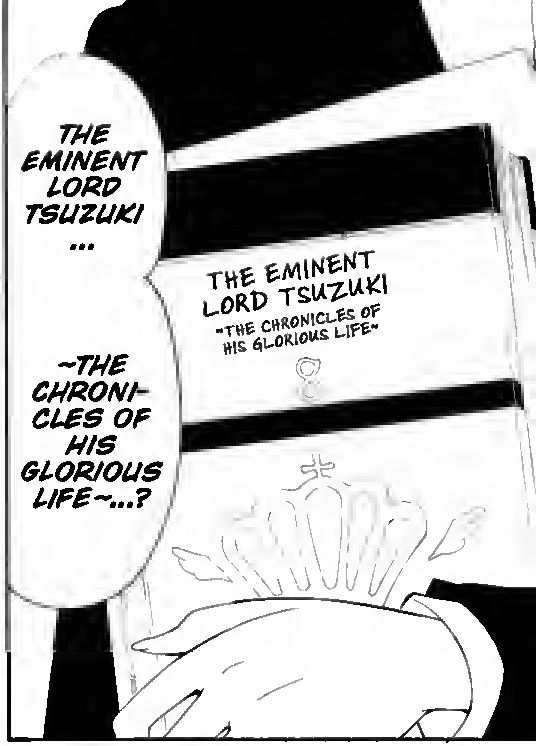

HE'S IN A BIT OF A MOOD, SO HE'S PROBABLY OUT SULKING.
HUH...? OH, SO SORRY...
I HAVE SOME THINGS I WANNA ASK HIM.
OH YEAH, WHERE'S "HIS HIGH-NESS"?
THANKS
PAKU (CHOMP)

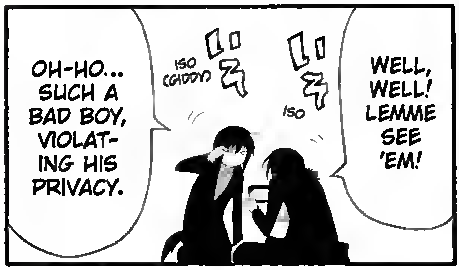
I SEE...
AT WHICH POINT HE STORMED OFF IN A HUFF.
I REALLY WANTED TO FINISH CLEANING DURING THE DAY TODAY, SO I CAME BACK WITH, "COULD YOU PLEASE GO BUY THINGS YOURSELF ONCE IN A WHILE?"
TCH
IRA (IRK)
...AND HE RETORTED, "THEN GO BUY ME ONE!"
...TO WHICH I REPLIED, "I'M BUSY. IT WOULD BE QUICKER JUST TO BUY ONE"...
HE WANTED ME TO DROP EVERY-THING AND BAKE A CAKE...

WHAT'RE THOSE BOOKS?
HM?
WAIT A SEC.

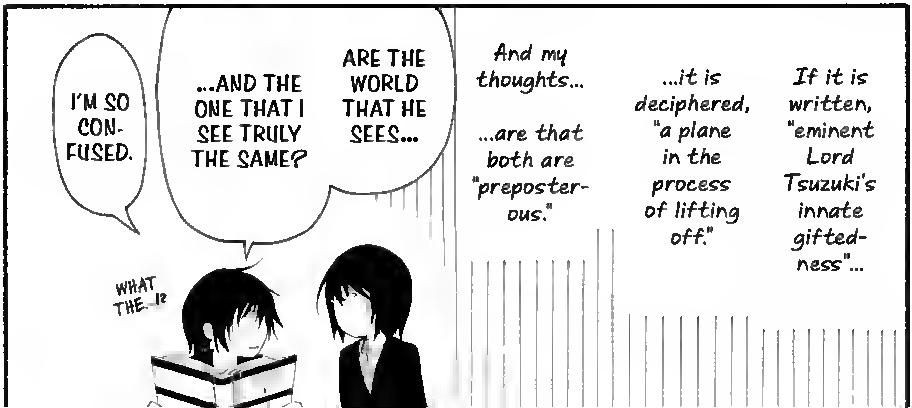
SUR-PRIS-ING...
SHOOT
WELL...
THESE GUYS HAVE FIGHTS?


THEY'RE TSUZUKI'S DIARIES. I WAS GOING TO PUT THEM AWAY IN HIS ROOM.
THERE ARE CURRENTLY TEN VOLUMES
!


THE EMINENT LORD TSUZUKI ...
~THE CHRONICLES OF HIS GLORIOUS LIFE~...?
THE EMINENT LORD TSUZUKI
~THE CHRONICLES OF HIS GLORIOUS LIFE~


OH-HO... SUCH A BAD BOY, VIOLATING HIS PRIVACY.
ISO
ISO
WELL, WELL! LEMME SEE 'EM!

IT SUSPECT HE IS TOO FAR GONE ON A NUMBER OF COUNTS.
...HE'S A KING EVEN IN HIS DIARIES?
Then I slept.
...I listened to classical music and read books on imperial rule.
While I may already be brimming with overwhelming natural charisma, in order to enable my minions to extol me, their master, with even firmer admiration...
I thought over a good many things today.

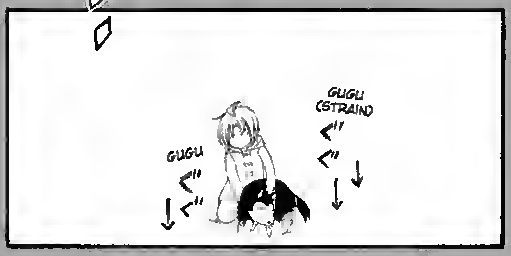

I'M SO CONFUSED.
...AND THE ONE THAT I SEE TRULY THE SAME?
ARE THE WORLD THAT HE SEES...
WHAT THE...!?
And my thoughts...
...are that both are "preposterous."
...it is deciphered, "a plane in the process of lifting off."
If it is written, "eminent Lord Tsuzuki's innate giftedness"...

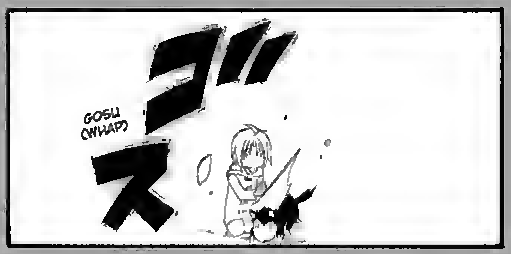
"Today, I picked up a fluffy, sketchy-looking character."
WHAT'S THIS...?
MM/DD/YYYY
TODAY, I PICKED UP A FLUFFY, SKETCHY-LOOKING CHARACTER
WHOA!
THIS ONE'S FROM SEVEN YEARS BACK!
I'M IMPRESSED HE'S KEPT IT UP!
...AHH, THAT...
HM?
WHAT'S THIS? A BUTTON?
...CERTAINLY TAKES ME BACK...

...HUH.
KII (CREAK)
GLASS-ES?
WHOA!?
A-A-A-ARE...ARE YOU ALL RIGHT!?
GAN (SHOCK)

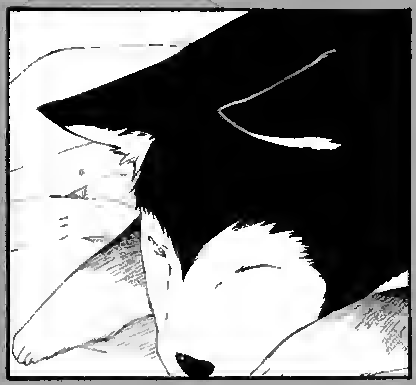
...SA-TSUKI!
.....
CLUMSY
GATA OKLATCHO
SATSUKI! COME AND HELP ME!
...WHAT IS IT...
...TSU-ZUKI?
BOSO (MUMBLE)
...DEMONS IN THE FOREST, HUH.
YOU THINK YOU CAN FIX HIM UP?
THERE'S A DOG OUT HERE WHO'S HURT!

YOU'RE AMAZING, SATSUKI!
BUT HOW COULD HE DIE AFTER BEING FIXED UP?
BE RIGHT THER—
GU (GRAB)

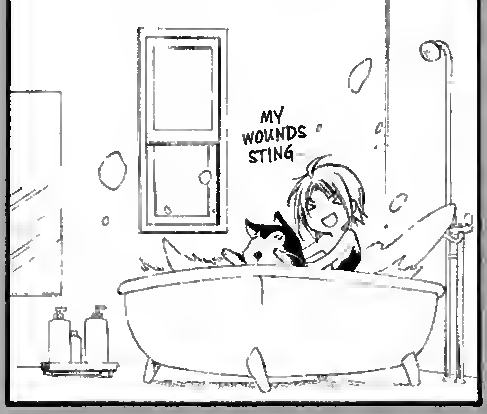

GUGU
GUGU (STRAIN)

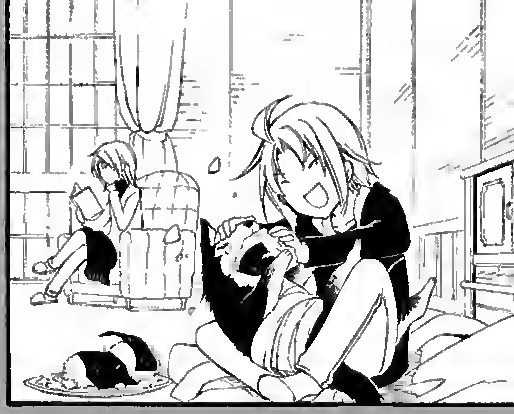

GOSU (WHAP)

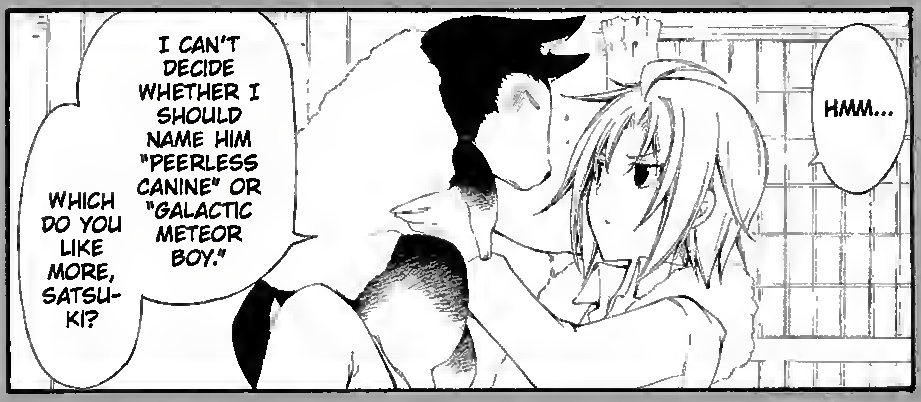
IF I PATCH HIM UP OUT THERE, HE PROBABLY WON'T LAST THE NIGHT.
BRING HIM INSIDE.

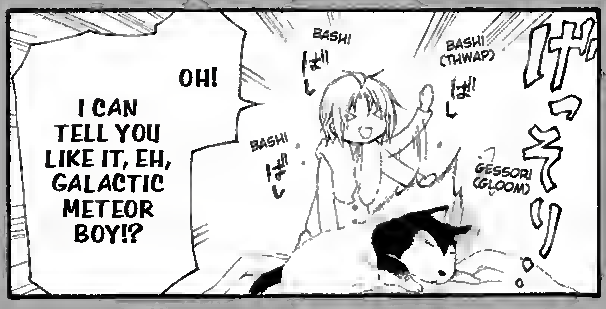


ZZZ
YOU'RE A DEMON, RIGHT?
I SAVED YOU FROM BEING DEVOURED BY YOUR FELLOW DEMON-FOLK.
DON'T YOU DARE HARM MY LITTLE BROTHER.
...WHY DIDN'T YOU KILL ME?
DON'T ASK ME.
MM ...?
...OH, YOU'RE AWAKE, DOG!
WANT SOME FOOD?

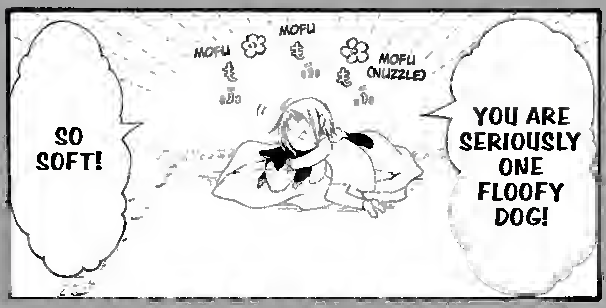

MY WOUNDS STING



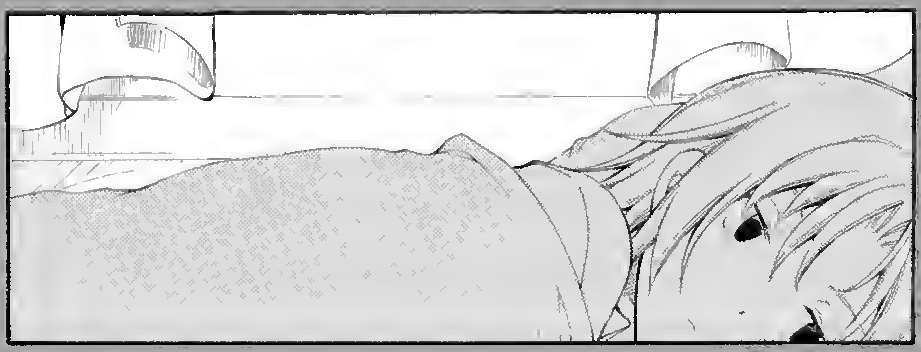

I CAN'T DECIDE WHETHER I SHOULD NAME HIM "PEERLESS CANINE" OR "GALACTIC METEOR BOY."
HMM...
WHICH DO YOU LIKE MORE, SATSUKI?

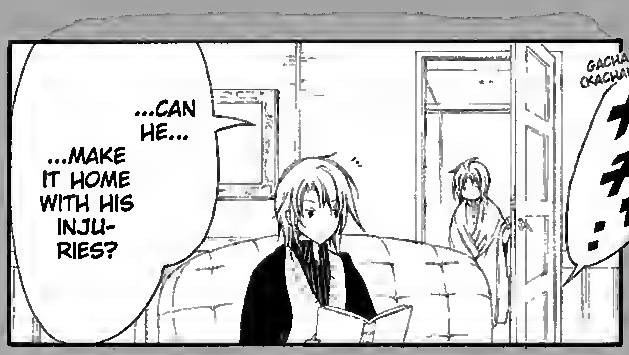

OH!
I CAN TELL YOU LIKE IT, EH, GALACTIC METEOR BOY!?
BASH!
BASH!
BASH! (THWAP)
GESSORI (GLOOM)

NIKORI (SMILE)
.....
GALACTIC METEOR BOY, MAYBE?


SO SOFT!
MOFU
MOFU
MOFU (NUZZLE)
YOU ARE SERIOUSLY ONE FLOOFY DOG!

MUKU CRIED
ZZZ
ZZZ...
...BUT I'M NOT GOING TO BE THE PLAYMATE OF SOME ANGEL CHILD.
I APPRE-CIATE THE FIRST AID...
GULP
RETRIEVED HIS GLASSES BECAUSE HE COULDN'T UNDO THE WINDOW LOCK WITHOUT THEM
HFF!
HFF!
GATA
GATA
GATA
GATA
GATA (RATTLED)




...CAN HE...
...MAKE IT HOME WITH HIS INJU-RIES?
GACHA GACHAK
ガチャ…

HE'S PROBABLY IN A HURRY.
BUT I WOULDN'T TRY TO STOP HIM.
MAY-BE.

WHY? IS IT 'COS HE'S A DEMON?
BETTER THAT YOU DON'T GET TOO ATTACHED EITHER.
IT'S BETTER THAT HE LEFT EARLY ON.
HE COULDA JUST STAYED UNTIL HE'D HEALED UP.
I'VE GOT LOTS OF TIME TO TAKE CARE OF HIM SINCE YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO PLAYS WITH ME, SATSUKI.
AND HE WAS SOOO FLUFFY...
PATAN (SHUT)
SO YOU DID NOTICE
...THAT ISN'T IT.
THINK ABOUT WHY WE'RE CONFINED HERE...
...IN THIS REMOTE PLACE.
IF WE SHOW FAVOR TO ANYONE...
...HE OR SHE WILL LIKELY BE KILLED.
IN ORDER THAT THE NEXT GOD MAY RULE THE WORLD FAIRLY, WE'RE RESTRICTED FROM INTERACTING WITH CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS ANY MORE THAN NECESSARY.
...THOUGH I SUSPECT THAT WILL STOP BEING THE CASE ONCE THE CRUSADES START.

THAT'S JUST HOW IT IS FOR GOD CANDI-DATES...
...TSU-ZUKI.

HAAH ...
GASHAN (KLANK)

...I'M STILL SORE, BUT MY WOUNDS ARE HEALING.

I'LL SEARCH FOR THE SCENT...
SNIFF

KASHA (KA-CHI)
MY ENEMY IS SURE TO HAVE STAYED CLOSE.
I NEED TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE...

GA (CHAK)
...KHI

GA (CHOMP)
.....!!

DON (BLAM)
DON
PWOP

HE BURROWED UNDER-GROUND
HFF
HFF
DAMMIT... MY BODY'S SLOWER...

KNCH
KNCH
KNCH
KNCH

I NEED TO FINISH THIS QUICKLY...
I'LL FORCE YOU OUT.
DON
DON (SLAM)
DON
DON
DON
DON
DON
BOKO (SHNK)
DON
GA (GRAB)
!!
DAN (SLAM)
THIS IS BAD...
GYU (CLENCH)

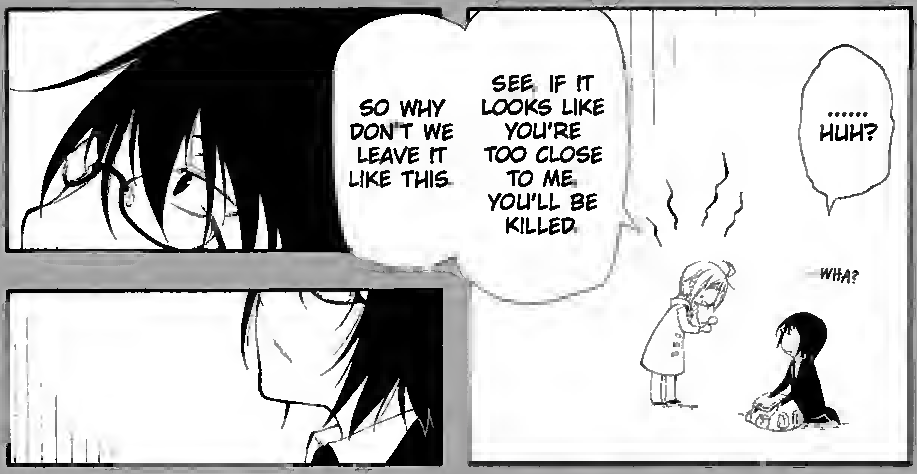
ZAN (SLASH)

SAA (PSHH)

...I'D RATHER YOU NOT DIE IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE... BAD AFTER-TASTE.
... BUT ...
HE TOLD ME NOT TO GET ATTACHED ...
ZAAA (ZWSHHH)

I PACKED FOOD AND MEDICINE AND A BLANKIE IN HERE!
SO!
MAKE SURE YOU EAT, OKAY !?
IF YOU DON'T, YOU WON'T GET BETTER!
GOOOO (WHOOSH)
WHA ...!?
BOSH (PWMP)
GYAA!
A SIGN OF ATKON-AGE!
THE GOD CANDIDATE GAVE HIM FOOD AND MEDS!
ARMY
WE'LL KILL ANYONE A GOD CAN-DIDATE FAVORS!
IS IT GONNA GET HIM KILLED!?
WOULD THIS BE CONSID-ERED "SHOWING FAVOR"?
OH...! WAIT A SEC.
HIS ACTIONS ARE BEYOND MY COMPRE-HENSION.
DO (DOOM)
WHAT'S WITH THIS CHILD...?
BUCHI (PRRIP)
I'VE GOT A GREAT IDEA!
THAT'S IT!
GA (GRAB)
...OH!

I'M GONNA BUY THIS BUTTON OF YOURS!
I DON'T WANNA PAY MONEY! I'LL GIVE YOU A DEBT OF GRATITUDE!
DON GABAAN
LET'S DO THIS!


SO WHY DON'T WE LEAVE IT LIKE THIS.
SEE IF IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE TOO CLOSE TO ME, YOU'LL BE KILLED.
.....HUH?
WHA?

YET WEAKENED AS I AM, I CANNOT REFUSE.
THUS, I MUST SELL IT TO YOU.
SU (SHE?)
HOW-EVER... I CAN'T HAVE YOU KEEP THAT.

...I SEE VERY WELL. I UNDER-STAND.

BUT ONCE MY WOUNDS HAVE HEALED...
...AND ALL MY BUSINESS IS COMPLETED... IN TWO OR THREE YEARS...
...I'LL RETURN TO BUY BACK THAT BUTTON.

WILL THAT BE SUFFICIENT TO MAKE US EVEN...

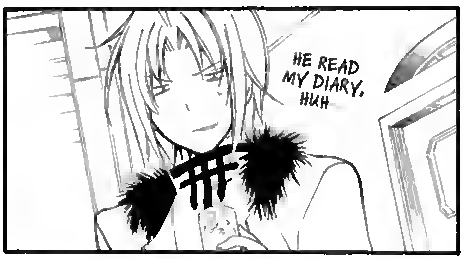
I DON'T WANT TO PAY MONEY... SO...
...I'LL SELL YOU BACK THE DEBT OF GRATITUDE FOR IT.

...TSUZUKI?
.....

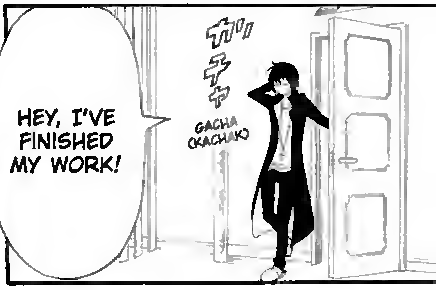
GALACTIC METEOR BOY...
.....COULD YOU PLEASE STOP CALLING ME THAT EMBARRASSING NAME?

HANA-
MURA...
...IS MY
NAME.
HM?

TODAY MARKS FIVE YEARS SINCE HE BECAME MY ATTEN-DANT.
GEEZ.
DOSU (WHUMP)


HE READ MY DIARY. HUH

.....HM?


HEY, I'VE FINISHED MY WORK!
GACHA (KACHAK)

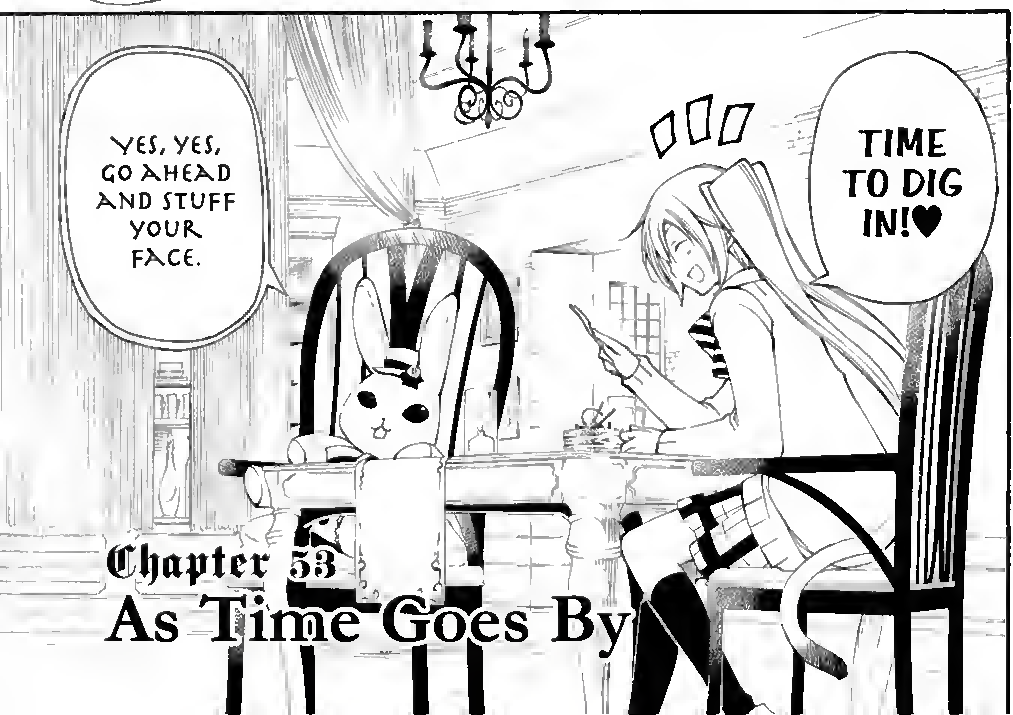
HUH.
THEY ARE ON GOOD TERMS, AFTER ALL.

I'M DOODLING ON HIS FACE.
KYU (SQUIK)
MM... MORE CAKE...
MMM....

BLOODY CROSS

BLOODY CROSS

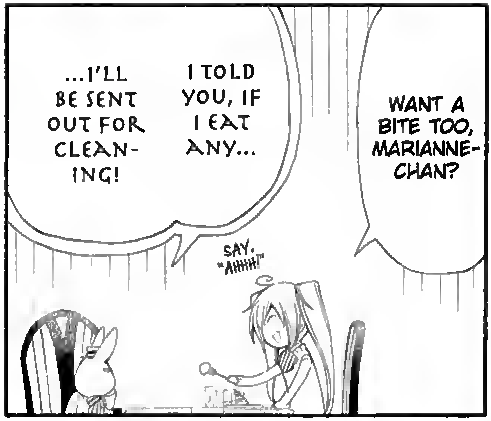
PAN (CLAP)
THEN MOMOSE WILL EAT IT ALL HERSELF, 'KAY?
OH, RIGHT.
I CAN'T HAVE ANYTHING. I'M A STUFFED ANIMAL!
SILLY.
GATA (CLAK)
WHAT DO YOU WANT, MARIANNE-CHAN?

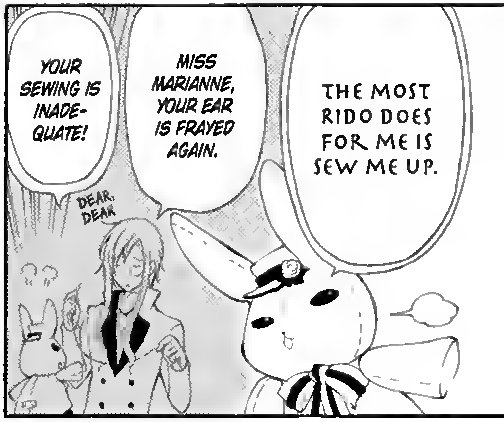


Chapter 53
As Time Goes By

IS IT INDEED? WHAT A LOVELY MASTER, TO REWARD YOU WITH A CAKE!
IT'S SO YUMMY, MOMOSE'S GONNA ASK HIM FOR ONE AGAIN!
YAY!
IT'S THE FIRST CAKE SATSUKI'S EVER BOUGHT TO REWARD MOMOSE!
Y'KNOW, THIS IS VERY, VERY SPECIAL CAKE!
WHEE!

PAKU (CHOMP)
MMM, YUMMY!

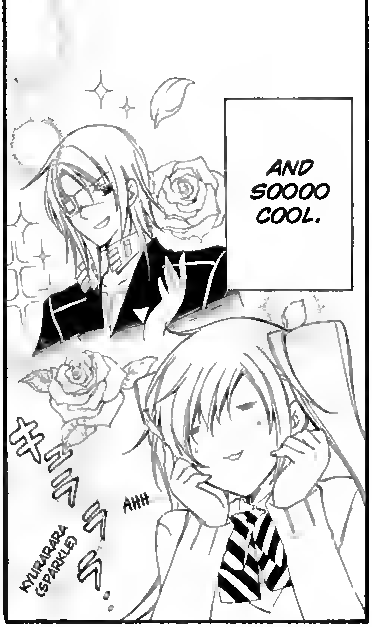

WANT A BITE TOO, MARIANNE-CHAN?
I TOLD YOU, IF I EAT ANY...
...I'LL BE SENT OUT FOR CLEAN-ING!
SAY, "AHHH!"

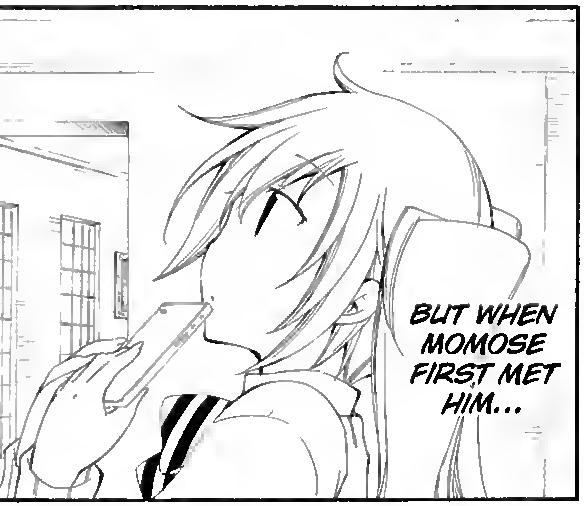

THE MOST RIDO DOES FOR ME IS SEW ME UP.
MISS MARIANNE, YOUR EAR IS FRAYED AGAIN.
YOUR SEWING IS INADE-QUATE!
DEAR, DEAR

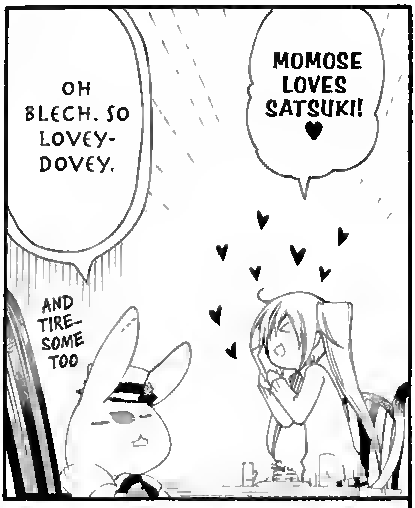
MOMOSE'S MASTER IS KIND.
HAMU (CHOMP)
はむ

OH, A TEXT FROM SATSUKI!

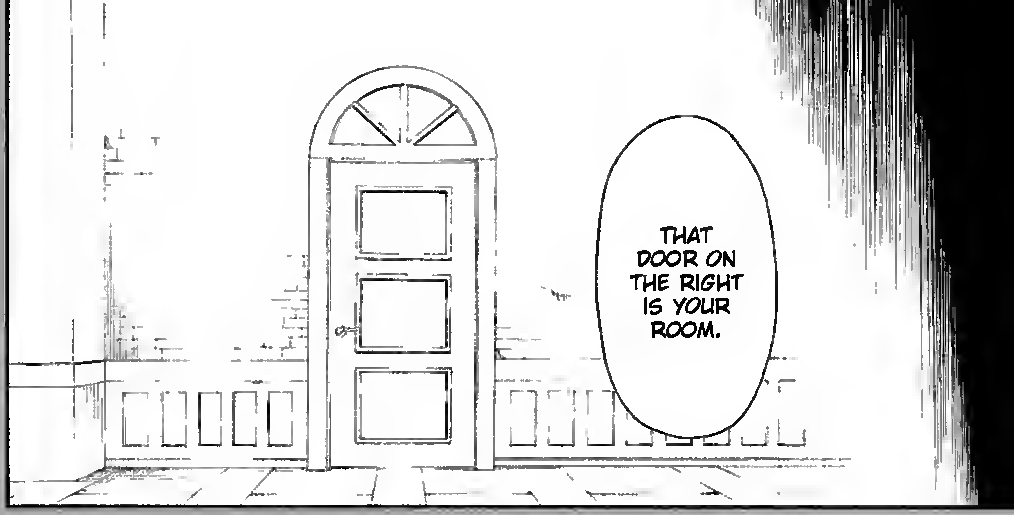
From: Satsuki
Re: (no subject)
I'll be back in the evening, so be good and wait for me.

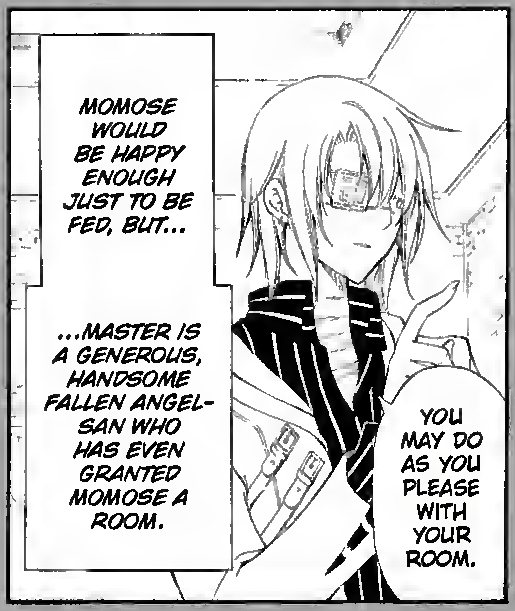

AND SOOOO COOL.
KYUUNNN (SPARKLE)
AHH


BUT WHEN MOMOSE FIRST MET HIM...


MOMOSE LOVES SATSUKI!
OH BLECH. SO LOVEY-DOVEY.
AND TIRE-SOME TOO

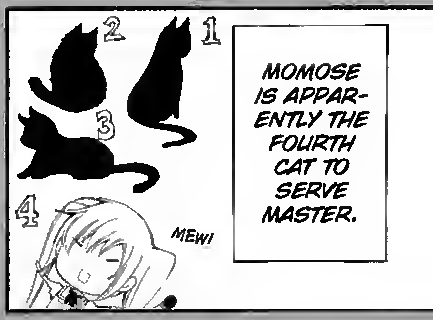
...HE WASN'T THIS NICE AT ALL...


THAT DOOR ON THE RIGHT IS YOUR ROOM.


MOMOSE WOULD BE HAPPY ENOUGH JUST TO BE FED, BUT...
...MASTER IS A GENEROUS, HANDSOME FALLEN ANGEL-SAN WHO HAS EVEN GRANTED MOMOSE A ROOM.
YOU MAY DO AS YOU PLEASE WITH YOUR ROOM.

DEAR MOM AND DAD WHOM MOMOSE DOESN'T KNOW...
MOMOSE HAS FOUND HERSELF A MASTER.

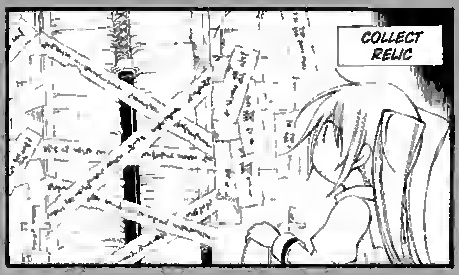
UM, UH...
WHAT SHOULD AN ATTENDANT DO!?
JUST DO WHAT-EVER I TELL YOU TO.


1
2
3
4
MEW!
MOMOSE IS APPAR-ENTLY THE FOURTH CAT TO SERVE MASTER.

LOST.
THEN PLEASE GIVE MOMOSE WORK!
ALL RIGHT...
IN THAT CASE, GO BUY US SOME DINNER.
KYU (CLENCH)
MOMOSE HAS TO LEARN TO LEARN HOW TO DO HER JOB SOON...
...OR ELSE MOMOSE MIGHT BE DISCARDED TOO.

RECEIVE DIRECTION

HELP


COLLECT RELIC

SEARCH

I SHALL GIVE YOU A REWARD LATER.
GOOD JOB.

WHEE!
I'M SO HAPPY!

NICE... ESPECIALLY THIS BLADE-TYPE RELIC.
I EXPECT IT WILL COME IN HANDY DURING THE CRU-SADES.

YOU'RE HURT... LET ME SEE IT.
SU (SSH)

KOU CVWEEND
WOW...
MOMOSE THOUGHT ONLY ANGELS COULD DO SUCH THINGS.
IT'S HEALED!
YOU'RE AMAZING, SATSUKI!
SUUU (PSHH)
!!
KYA (CHATTER)
KYA
HEY, HEY, HOW COME A FALLEN ANGEL LIKE YOU CAN—
YOU ASK A LOT OF QUES-TIONS.
FUI CTURND

...I THOUGHT WHEN I BECAME A FALLEN ONE...
...I'D LOSE EVERY-THING, BUT...
MOMOSE'S THIRSTY
...I STILL HAVE BOTH THE STATUS... AND POWER OF A GOD CANDI-DATE.
IT SEEMS GOD HAS NO INTENTION OF LETTING ME FLY FREE.
I CANNOT AVOID HAVING TO FIGHT AND KILL OR BE KILLED BY TSUZUKI.
I DON'T KNOW...
SHURU (FWIRL)
...HOW LONG IT WILL BE UNTIL THE CRUSADES BEGIN...

AFTER ALL...IN EXCHANGE FOR THIS POWER, I WILL GRADUALLY LOSE MY "SANITY"... MY SENSE OF SELF...
...BUT BY THE TIME THEY DO...
...I PROBABLY WON'T FEEL THE SLIGHTEST HESITATION ABOUT FIGHTING HIM.
GAAH ...!
!
WH-WHAT DO I DO?
IT LOOKS LIKE MASTER IS IN PAIN!
UMM, WHERE WOULD THERE BE MEDICINE ...?

GI (CREAK)
WHAT WERE YOU LOOKING AT?
UH... UM...
ZOKU (SHIVER)
MO- MOSE WAS...
...AH!
GUI (YANK)

OW...
UNH...
KOTSU (TOK)
—SE.
MO-MOSE, IT'S MORN-ING.
ARE YOU AWAKE YET?
GACHA (CHAK)
GH!!
M-MO-MOSE'S SORRY!
MO-MOSE'S SORRY, SATSUKI ...!
KATA (TRMBL) KATA
...AHH...
I SEE I'VE...
...DONE IT AGAIN, HAVE I...?

MO-MOSE'S MASTER ...

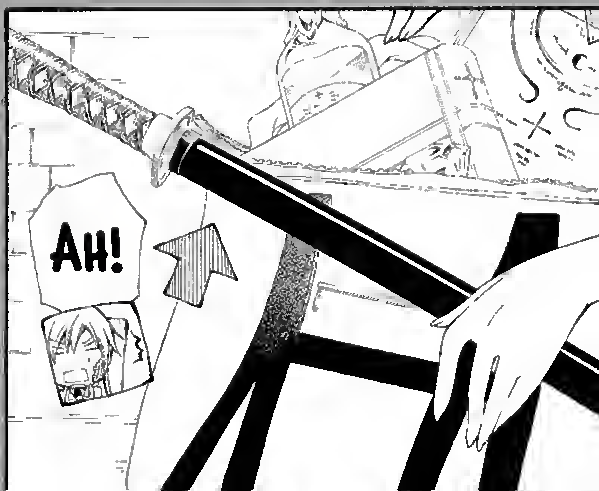
...MAY BE SOMEONE TO FEEL SORRY FOR.

MOMOSE WANTS TO BE BE USEFUL.
ZA (SWEEP)
HM? IT CAN'T BE.
SATSUKI'S OUT RIGHT NOW. MOMOSE'S THE ONLY ONE AT HOME.
GATA (CLACK)
SA-TSUKI?
GACHA (KACHAK)
SA-TSUKI'S ROOM?
THEN WHO...?
TA (TMP)
HUH?

HUH ...?

OH!
PORO (DROP)

THIEF !!!
SHUT UP! BE QUIET!
TH...
TH...


Ah!

CATCH HER!
GOO (VWOOM)
G-GIVE THAT BACK!
VUVU (VWSH)
THAT'S THE BLADE MOMOSE FETCHED FOR SATSUKI!
MOMOSE WON'T FORGIVE YOU IF YOU TAKE IT!
JA (SHAK)
TCH ...!
...SA-TSUKI'S NEW CAT?
ARE YOU...
PASA (FLOP)

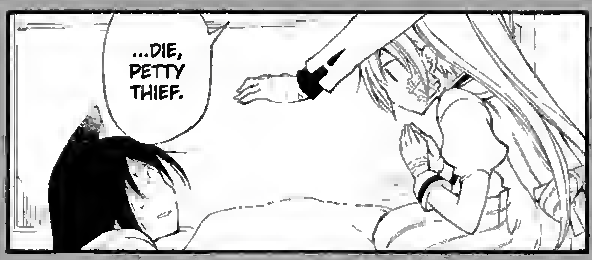
HUH ...?
HIS THIRD.
I WAS... THE CAT BEFORE YOU.
YOU LIE!
IF YOU WERE HIS CAT, YOU WOULDN'T BE STEALING HIS THINGS!
MOMOSE MIGHT BE STUPID, BUT YOU CAN'T FOOL MOMOSE!
BISHI (POINT)
NO
IT AIN'T A LIE.
AH! NO, NO!
ACK!
YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE THE CRIMINAL!
GEEZ, CAN'T YOU JUST PRETEND YOU NEVER SAW ANY-THING?
I CAN'T GET ANY WORK WITH MY EAR DAMAGED LIKE IT IS...
...SO WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME STEALIN' AND SELLIN' HIS DIVINE RELICS?
.....?
...YOU...
YOU MUST'VE SEEN BY NOW...
...HOW HE CHANGES WHEN HIS SANITY DISAP-PEARS?

IN ONE OF HIS FITS...
...SATSUKI DESTROYED THIS EAR OF MINE.
AND I AIN'T THE ONLY ONE.
DIDN'TCHA KNOW? THE CATS BEFORE ME...THE FIRST TWO...
WAY I HEAR IT...
...THEY WERE KILLED BRUTALLY DURING ONE OF SATSUKI'S CHAN-GES.
.....!!
YOU'RE IN FOR IT TOO.
.....
YOU'LL BE KILLED IF YOU STAY.
COME ON.
I'LL HELP YOU ESCAPE.
GU (GRAB)

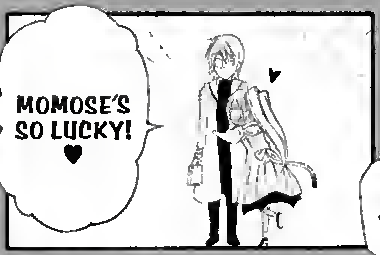
DO (STAB)
.....
HUH?
ZUPU (SHLUK)
EVEN IF HE DOES TERRIBLE THINGS... LOTS OF TIMES.
SATSUKI APOLOGIZED TO MOMOSE.
SO SATSUKI TURNS SCARY? SO WHAT?
SWUUU (PZSHH)
.....
YOU'RE A FOOL.
DUMBER THAN MOMOSE.
GATA (THNK)
...MOMOSE WAS SUPER-SUPER-EXCITED.
...WHEN SATSUKI SAID HE'D MAKE MOMOSE HIS ATTENDANT ...
YOU SEE...
POMU (CLAP)
...TO THIS MAN WHO EATS YUMMY FOOD WITH MOMOSE.
...MOMOSE PLEDGED TO DEVOTE THE REST OF HER LIFE...
MOMOSE HAD ALWAYS BEEN ALONE AND HUNGRY, SO...

YOU'RE THE WORST KIND OF PERSON.
YOU LEFT WITHOUT EVEN CONSOLING YOUR MASTER...
...AND YOU WERE HIS PET CAT!

WEL-COME HOME!
I'M BACK.
YOU PROTECTED THE RELICS. GOOD GIRL.
TEE HEE!


...DIE, PETTY THIEF.

OH! SA-TSUKI!
DO GBAND


MOMOSE'S SO LUCKY!

!!
I REALLY HOPE YOU LIKE IT THOUGH.
I'D GONE OUT TO BUY YOU A REWARD.

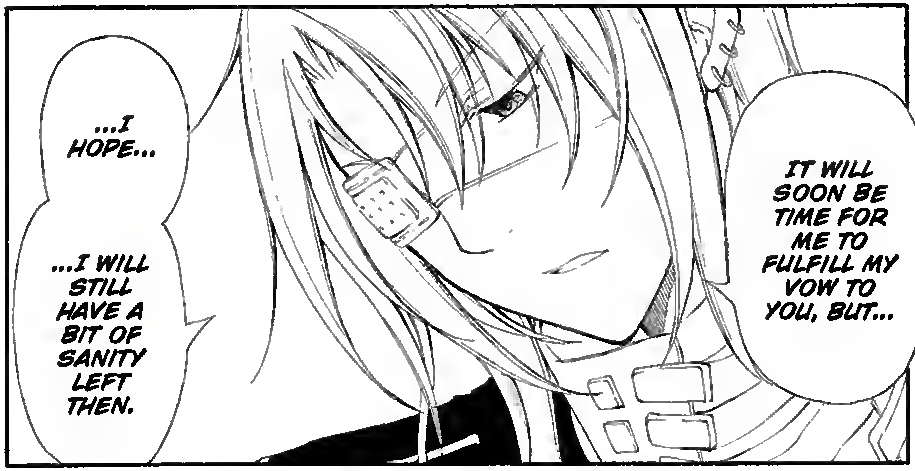
UM, SATSUKI?
MOMO-SE...
...HAS A FAVOR TO ASK OF SATSUKI.
I PROM-ISE.
P-PROMISE NOT TO LAUGH?
WHAT IS IT?
...OKAY.
SO...
MOMOSE IS SATSUKI'S CAT NOW.
MOMOSE DOESN'T WANT A LIFE WITHOUT SATSUKI.
.....
UM...

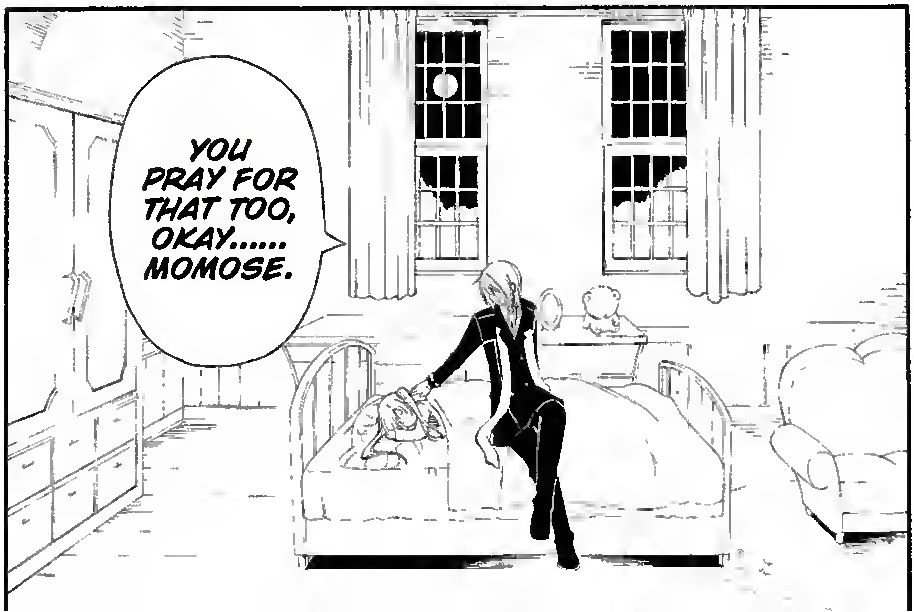
...WHEN SATSUKI BECOMES GOD...
...AND MOMOSE AND SATSUKI HAVE TO GO SEPARATE WAYS...
...COULD YOU PLEASE KILL MOMOSE?
...MO-MOSE?
TH-THAT WAY WHEN SATSUKI BECOMES GOD...
...HIS VERY FIRST ACT AS GOD IS TO KILL MO-MOSE.
USING THAT BLADE...
...THAT MOMOSE FETCHED FOR SATSUKI?
MOMOSE IS SATSUKI'S FOURTH CAT...
...AND SATSUKI OWNS MANY IMPORTANT THINGS, SO...
...IT'S HARD FOR MOMOSE TO BE SATSUKI'S "FIRST" IN ANYTHING.
THIS IS...
...ONE "FIRST" MOMOSE COULD HAVE, RIGHT?

...TO ASK SUCH A PROMISE OF HER MASTER.
SU (STROKE)
...WHAT A WEIRD CHILD... MY KITTY IS...

THANKS FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY! DOESN'T LOOK LIKE YOU'RE COMING OUT OF YOUR ROOM AGAIN, SO I'M JUST GONNA LET MYSELF OUT!
MARIANNE
BYE BYE!
You have 1 new message
I'M BACK.
KATSU (TAK)
KATSU
MO-MOSE.
KACHA (KACHAK)
ZZZ... ZZZ...
MM? MOMOSE ...?
GISHI (CREAK)
SHE'S ASLEEP.

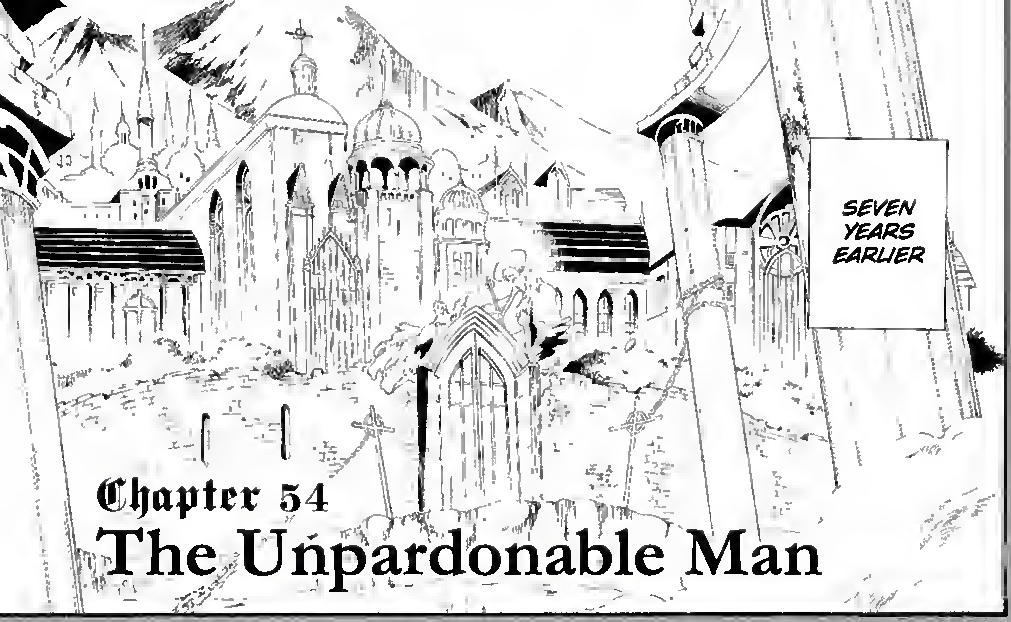
.....
...AS TIME GOES BY...
...IT'S GETTING HARDER AND HARDER... TO TELL WHEN I'M SANE...
...OR IF I'VE GONE MAD AL-READY.


IT WILL SOON BE TIME FOR ME TO FULFILL MY VOW TO YOU, BUT...
...I HOPE...
...I WILL STILL HAVE A BIT OF SANITY LEFT THEN.

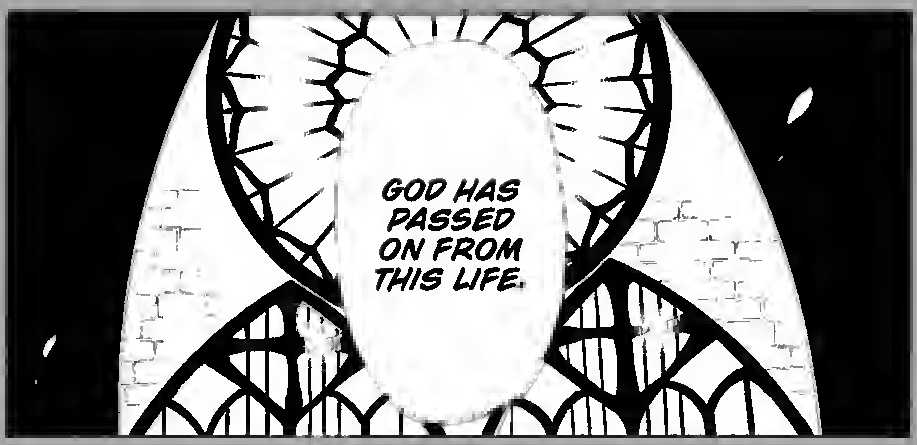

YOU PRAY FOR THAT TOO, OKAY..... MOMOSE.

BLOODY CROSS

BLOODY CROSS



Chapter 54
The Unpardonable Man



KOTSU (TOK)
コツ
WHO WILL BE GRANTED THE HONOR OF TAKING PART IN THE CRUSADES...?
THERE ARE THIRTEEN WHO ARE ELIGIBLE TO BECOME THE NEXT GOD...
...FROM WHICH ONLY TWO SHALL BE CHOSEN.

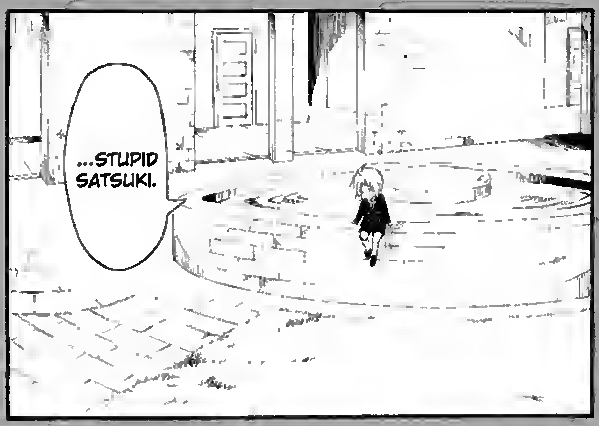
THERE ARE AN AWFUL LOT OF PEOPLE HERE AT SANCTUM TODAY.
TSUZUKI, AGE 11
GODHOOD SUCCESSION RANK: TENTH
THEY'VE BEEN SAYING IT WAS CLOSE FOR A WHILE.
THAT'S INEVITA-BLE.
APPARENTLY, GOD PASSED AWAY AT LAST.
SATSUKI, AGE 13
GODHOOD SUCCESSION RANK: THIRD

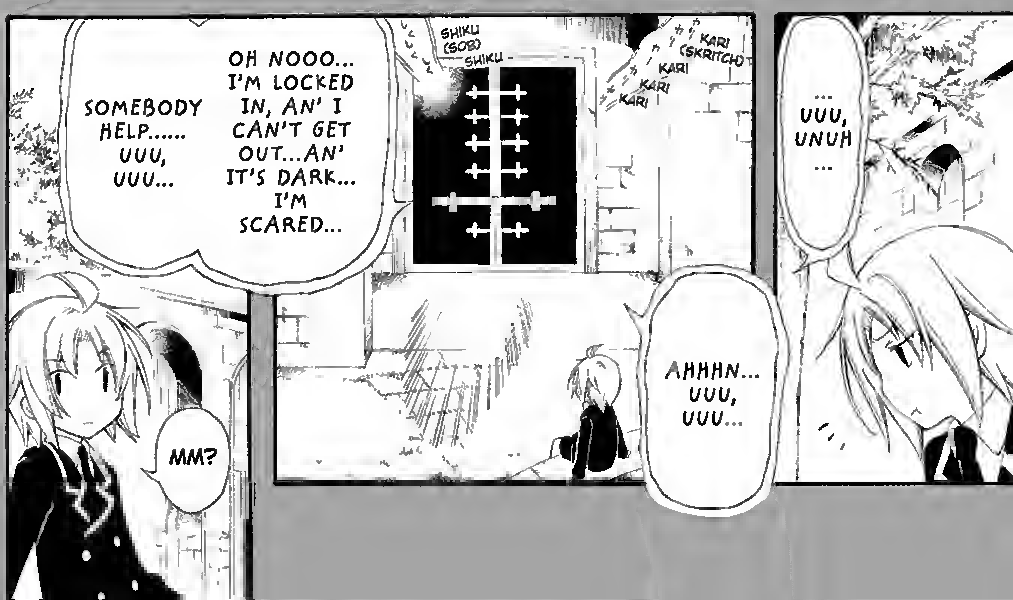
TWO GOD CANDIDATES ARE PICKED FOR THE CRUSADES, RIGHT?
IF WE GET CHOSEN, DO I HAVE TO FIGHT YOU, SATSUKI?
I DON'T WANT TO.
DON'T WORRY. THE PROBABILITY OF THAT HAPPENING IS EXTREMELY LOW.
LOOK, THERE'S ONLY A ONE-IN-THIRTEEN CHANCE ONE OF US WILL BE SELECTED, BUT...
FIRST GOD CANDIDATE
1/13
THERE ARE THEN TWELVE CHOICES FOR THE SECOND PICK.
AN ADDITIONAL ONE IN TWELVE ODDS.
...FOR THE SECOND TO BE THE OTHER OF US...
...MAKING US BOTH PARTICIPANTS N THE CRUSADE, IS A ONE-IN-156 OUTCOME.
THE CUMULATIVE PROBABILITY IS 1/156.
ONE-HUNDRED-FIF...
WELL!
IN ANY CASE, I GUESS IT'S UNLIKELY I'LL GET PICKED WHEN I'M TENTH IN LINE.
KUSHA (CRUMPLE)
IF YOU'RE CHOSEN, I'LL HELP YOU, 'KAY?

AH, THERE YOU ARE, LADDIES.
...SHALL OVERSEE ALL FROM THIS SANCTUM, UTILIZING DIVINE POWER...
AN ANGEL, TO BE SELECTED BY THE PRIOR GOD THROUGH THE CRUSADES...
THE GOD IS THE ONE WHO RULES OVER ALL THINGS IN THIS REALM...
...WHERE ANGELS, DEMONS, AND HUMANS INTERMINGLE.
PAID YOUR RESPECTS TO THE OLD GEEZERS YET?
LONG TIME NO SEE. YOU SEEM WELL.
AL-READY DONE.
GOOD.
KASHAN (CLINK)
FATHER HANS.
I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU.
...ACK!
PHEW, THAT WAS CLOSE! I DROPPED IT AND ALMOST LOST IT!
WELL, IN THAT CASE...
SEEMS YOU'LL BE ALLOWED TO DO BOTH YOURS AND YOUR BROTHER'S, BUT...
THERE'S A PILE OF TEDIOUS PAPERWORK TO GET THROUGH.
YOU BROUGHT THAT WITH YOU AGAIN?
...TSUZUKI.

DID YOU HEAR? I'VE GOT PAPER-WORK TO DO.
WAIT FOR ME IN THE ROOM THEY PREPARED FOR US.
WE'LL GO HOME TO-MOR-ROW.
...MM, ALL RIGHT.
THAT HANAMURA DEMON...
HEY.
WILL HE REALLY COME BACK IN A COUPLE YEARS?
DOES HE UNDER-STAND...?
...I KEEP TELLING YOU, DON'T SHOW FAVOR!
THAT'S ALL YOU EVER SAY!
!
OH MY!
MU GIRYO
THEN IF YOU BECOME A GOD CANDIDATE, MAKE HIM YOUR ATTENDANT.
AN ATTENDANT IS SOMEONE WHO HELPS THE CANDIDATE, RIGHT?
SO EVEN IF YOU BECOME FRIENDS, HE WON'T GET KILLED...
I DON'T NEED AN ATTENDANT. I HAVE YOU.

I'LL BE BACK IN THE EVENING.
BE GOOD, OKAY?


...STUPID SATSUKI.


SOMEBODY HELP..... UUU, UUU...
OH NOOO... I'M LOCKED IN, AN' I CAN'T GET OUT...AN' IT'S DARK... I'M SCARED...
SHIKU (SOB) SHIKU
KARI (SKRITCH) KARI KARI KARI
MM?
AHHHN... UUU, UUU...
... UUU, UNUH ...

GII (CREAK)
DID HE ACCIDENTALLY LOCK HIMSELF IN?
GIKO (CLUNK)
OOF
MY...
...RESCUER...
...FROM...
...HEAVEN...
...IS HERE!
AAAA (SHIIINE)
ZU (TRIP)
DON'T TALK!! YOU'LL DIE!!
AEE!
I BIT MY TONGUE
TH-THANKSH...
GO (WHACK)
AGONY...

GASHI (GRAB)
MY SAV-IOR!
YOU AND I ARE GONNA BE THE BEST OF FRIENDS FROM THIS DAY ON!!
I KNOW! TO SAY THANK YOU, HOW ABOUT I SHOW YOU MY SECRET BASE!!!?
FRIENDS ...?
F-FRIEND
?
IF WE SHOW FAVOR TO ANYONE...
...HE OR SHE WILL LIKELY BE KILLED.
FR...
GOOD-BYE!
DA (DASH)
LOOK, I...
...REALLY, REALLY WANT TO GO, BUT...
I...
MY FIRST FRIEND
JIRI
JIRI (TENSE)
WAKI (WAGGLE)
WAKI
わき

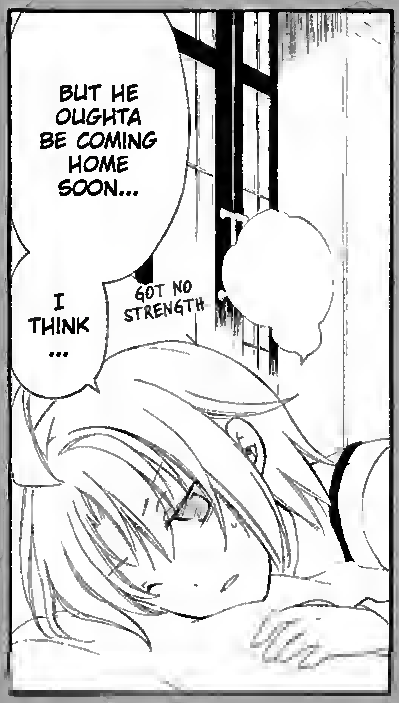
SATSU-KIIII!
ARE WE GONNA HAVE TO GO ON LIVING ALONE, JUST THE TWO OF US, FOREVER!?
HFF!
HFF!
DOSA (FLOP)
...YEAH!
THAT'S IT!
NUKU (BOLT)
THAT'S THE WAY!
HUH?
SO IF WE DON'T GET CHOSEN FOR THE UPCOMING CRUSADES, WE'LL STOP BEING CANDI-DATES...
...AND BE ABLE TO LIVE FREE?
MAYBE?
FREEDOM
EQUALS !!
UNSELECTED
SNIFF!
SNIFF!
...HM?
I HAVE SUCH... TERRIBLE PEOPLE SKILLS...
THIS IS ALL 'COS WE'RE GOD CANDI-DATES.
...WAIT A SEC.
I PRAY NEITHER OF US IS PICKED FOR THE CRUSADES!
PAN
PAN (CLAP)
DEAR PRIOR LORD GOD WHO HAS PASSED AWAY.

GUTTARI (SLUMP)
...HM?
BUT I DIDN'T GO VERY FAR BEFORE COMING BACK HERE...
HUFF!
HUFF!
ARGH... I'M TOTALLY WIPED OUT...
WHAT THE...!?

KARI (SCRITCH)
I KNOW HE'LL DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.....

HUH ...?
PANIC!
UHH... WHAT SHOULD I DO...?
RIGHT, ASK SATSUKI.

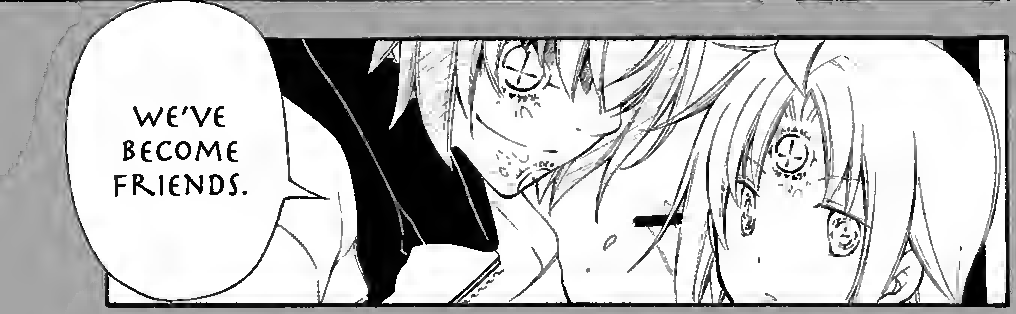
OH... NEVER MIND.
GURA (SWAY)
BOSU (FWMP)
HE ISN'T HERE RIGHT NOW.


BUT HE OUGHTA BE COMING HOME SOON...
I THINK ...
GOT NO STRENGTH

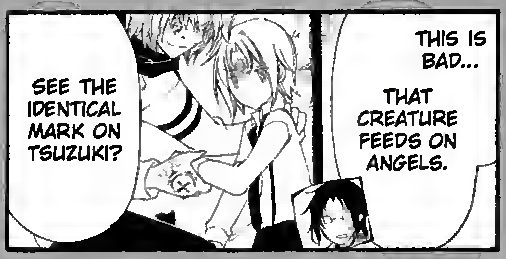
WITH YOUR HELP, I GOT THROUGH IT QUICKLY.
KOTSU (TOK)
THANK YOU VERY MUCH, FATHER.
NO, NO.
MUSTN'T LEAVE YOUR LITTLE BROTHER ON HIS OWN TOO LONG.
GACHA (KCHAK)
TURNS OUT WE COULD'VE BROUGHT HIM ALONG.
THOUGH HE LIKELY WOULD'VE BEEN BORED...

SORRY.
I HAVEN'T HAD MY FILL OF FUN YET.
KACHA
BACK ALREADY, SATSUKI?
... AWW ...
TSU-ZUKI?
!?
TSUZUKI... WHAT HAP-PENED?

I'M GONNA GO OFF TO PLAY WITH HIM FOR A BIT.


WE'VE BECOME FRIENDS.

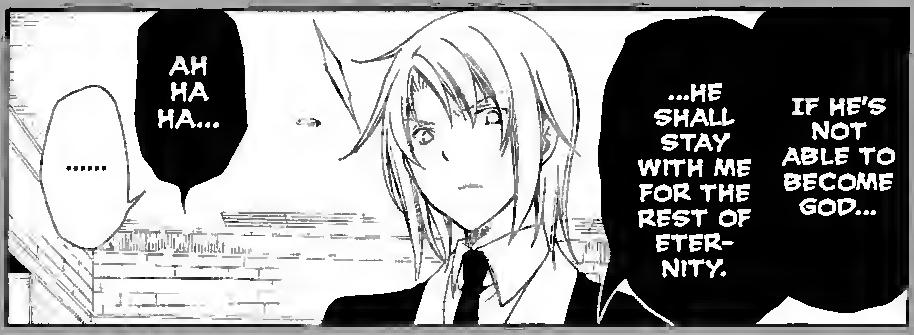
FRI-ENDS?
HUH? ...HEY! THAT MARK...
IT'S THE MARK OF A DEMON WHO'S SUPPOSED TO BE LOCKED UP IN SANCTUM CUSTODY...
WHAT'S HE DOING OUT-SIDE?


THIS IS BAD... THAT CREATURE FEEDS ON ANGELS.
SEE THE IDENTICAL MARK ON TSUZUKI?

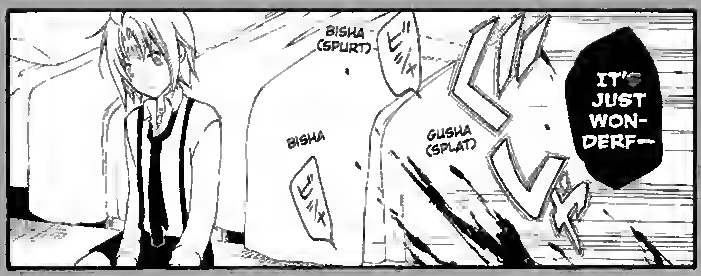
IT INDICATES HE'S BEEN CHOSEN AS PREY.
THE DEMON'S SUCH A BOTHER, WE'D CON-FINED THE POSSESSED ANGEL ALONG WITH HIM, BUT...

BUSHI (SPURT)
YOU'VE PICKED THE WRONG VICTIM.
YOU SCUM.
GAKU (SLUMP)
REMOVE THE MARK.
GORI (GRIND)
DO IT, AND I'LL SPARE YOUR LIFE AND LET THEM MERELY INCARCERATE YOU.
I... CANNOT ERASE IT ANYMORE.
GOPO (GAPE)
... WHAT?
MEKI (CRACK)
MEKI
MEKI
KPP!
HAGK!

...I HEAR HE'S A GOD CANDI-DATE.
WHICH IS WHY WE MADE A PACT.
HE WILL PROVIDE ME NOUR-ISHMENT UNTIL HE BECOMES GOD.

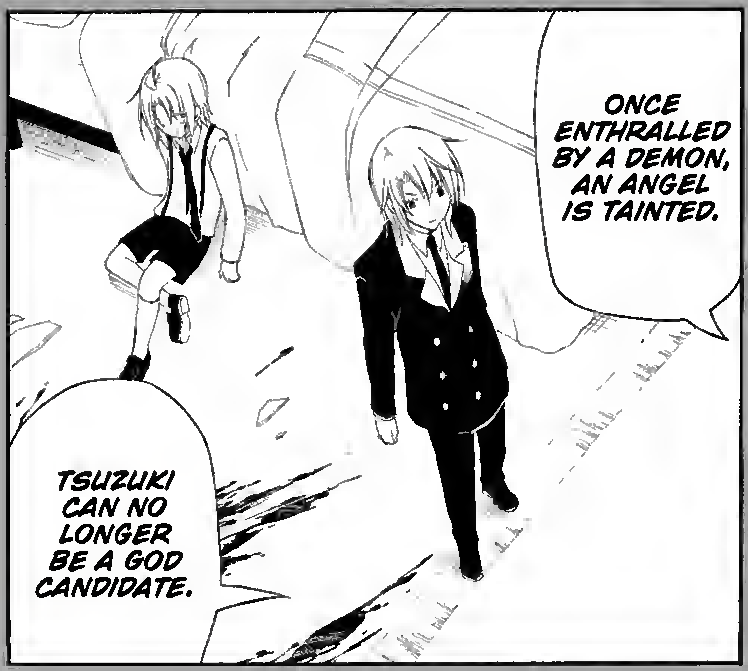

IF HE'S NOT ABLE TO BECOME GOD...
...HE SHALL STAY WITH ME FOR THE REST OF ETER-NITY.
AH HA HA...
.....

...NO.
SORRY, SATSUKI... BUT IT'S NOT POSSIBLE.
...HUH?


IT'S JUST WON-DERF—
BISHA (SPURT)
BISHA
GUSHA (SPLAT)

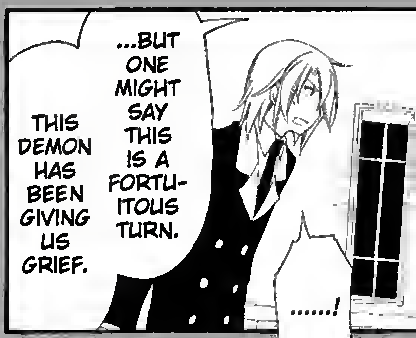
FATHER.
THERE MUST BE MANY ACCOMPLISHED CLERGY AND RESEARCHERS HERE.
WE CAN FIND A WAY TO UNDO THIS PARASITISM.

WE'RE SO STUMPED, WE HAD TO IMPRISON THE POSSESSED ANGEL ALONG WITH HIM.
...BUT NO SOLUTION HAS BEEN FOUND YET.
WE'VE TRIED DEALING WITH THIS DEMON'S MARK MANY TIMES BEFORE...


ONCE ENTHRALLED BY A DEMON, AN ANGEL IS TAINTED.
TSUZUKI CAN NO LONGER BE A GOD CANDIDATE.

...AND...
...THAT'S NOT THE ONLY PROB-LEM.

...SO LONG AS TSUZUKI DOESN'T BECOME GOD, THE DEMON WILL HAVE TO BE SATISFIED WITH FEEDING JUST OFF OF HIM INDEFINITELY.
SINCE HE'S MADE A PACT TO FEED ON TSUZUKI UNTIL THE BOY BECOMES GOD...


THIS DEMON HAS BEEN GIVING US GRIEF.
...BUT ONE MIGHT SAY THIS IS A FORTU-ITOUS TURN.
.....!

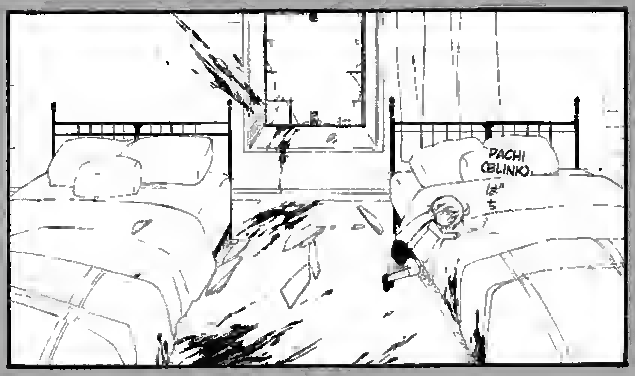
THERE ARE THIRTEEN GOD CANDI-DATES.
THE LOSS OF ONE, ESPECIALLY THE TENTH-RANKED ANGEL...
...WILL NOT DISRUPT THE CRUSADES.

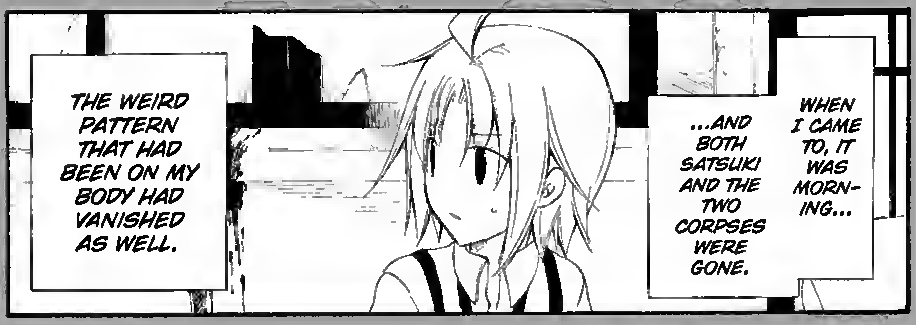
NH...HUH? YOU'RE BACK... SATSUKI!?
I FELL ASLEEP?
BOOO (DAZED)
WELCOME BA—

PIKU (TWITCH)
MM...

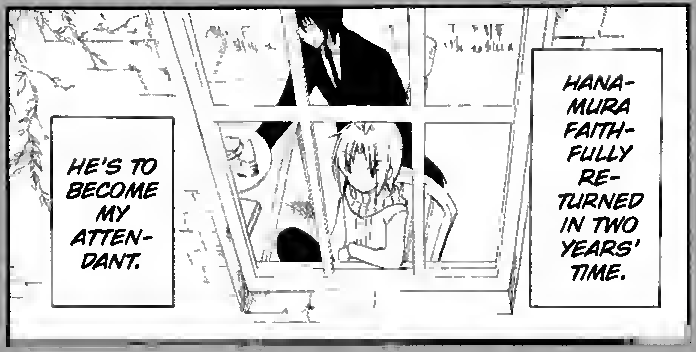
...HUH?

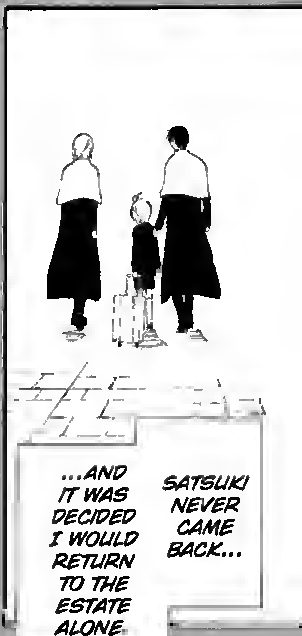
...WH-WHAT'S... GOING ON...?
SATSUKI, YOU...
GURA (TEETER)
...GH.
SA-TSUKI ...
DOSA (THUMP)
...YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY ANY-MORE...
...TSU-ZUKI.
I'LL TAKE ON...
...THAT PACT OF YOURS.


PACHI (BLINK).


THE WEIRD PATTERN THAT HAD BEEN ON MY BODY HAD VANISHED AS WELL.
...AND BOTH SATSUKI AND THE TWO CORPSES WERE GONE.
WHEN I CAME TO, IT WAS MORNING...

...BUT HE HASN'T COME HOME.
EVER SINCE, I'VE WAITED FOR SATSUKI ...


HE'S TO BECOME MY ATTENDANT.
HANAMURA FAITHFULLY RETURNED IN TWO YEARS' TIME.

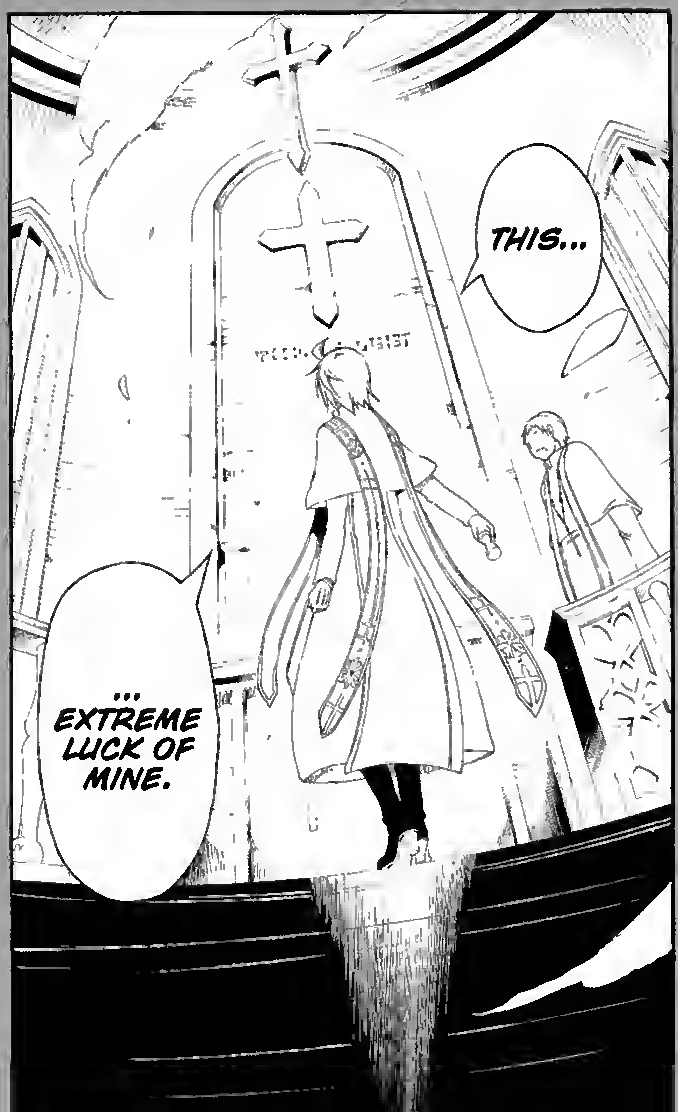

...AND IT WAS DECIDED I WOULD RETURN TO THE ESTATE ALONE.
SATSUKI NEVER CAME BACK...

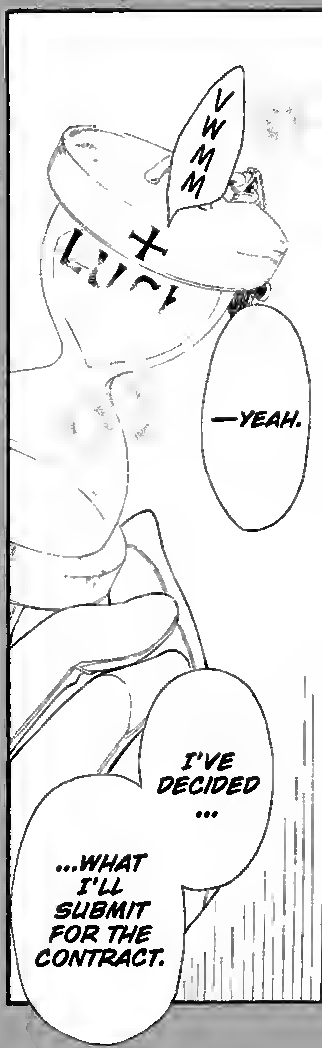
...SA-TSUKI STILL HASN'T COME HOME.
THERE HAS BEEN AN ORACLE, AND YOU ARE NOW A GOD CANDIDATE IN TRUTH.
SOON ...
...WE SHALL KNOW WHO THE OTHER CANDIDATE YOU'LL FACE IN THE CRUSADES WILL BE.
HISO
WHAT IMPRESSIVE LUCK. IT COULDN'T BE ANY-THING ELSE.
HISO (WHISPER)
HE WAS SELECTED DESPITE BEING RANKED TENTH.
R-REVEREND FATHER! WE'VE RECEIVED NOTICE REGARDING THE SECOND GOD CANDIDATE!
EXCHANGE
.....
AH, WHAT GREAT TIDINGS INDEED.
AH...ER, ACTU-ALLY NOT...
IN EXCHANGE FOR A CANDIDATE'S POWER...
...YOU MUST TENDER THAT WHICH IS A SOURCE OF POWER WITHIN YOU.
WELL, THEN, TSUZUKI.
HERE IS THE GOD CANDI-DATE'S CON-TRACT.

THE OTHER CANDIDATE SELECTED BY THE ORACLE...
...IS...A FALLEN ANGEL.
HUH?
THE THIRD IN LINE... THE ONE WHO'S BEEN MISSING ...
...SA-TSUKI.

A FALLEN ANGEL GOD CANDIDATE IS UNPRECEDENTED!
WHAT'S GOING ON!?
ZAWA (MURMUR)
...NOW, NOW. SETTLE DOWN, ALL.
ZAWA
ZAWA
PERHAPS THERE IS SOME SPECIAL SITUATION THAT'S TAKING PLACE.
THIS MIGHT TURN OUT TO BE...A MOST SINGULAR CRUSADE.
THAT'S RIGHT.
HOW BLESSED WE ARE TO BE SERVING GOD...
...IN THIS ERA OF A HISTORICAL CRUSADE.
AH...
KOTSU (TOK)
A REVOLUTION WROUGHT BY GOD.
...THIS...

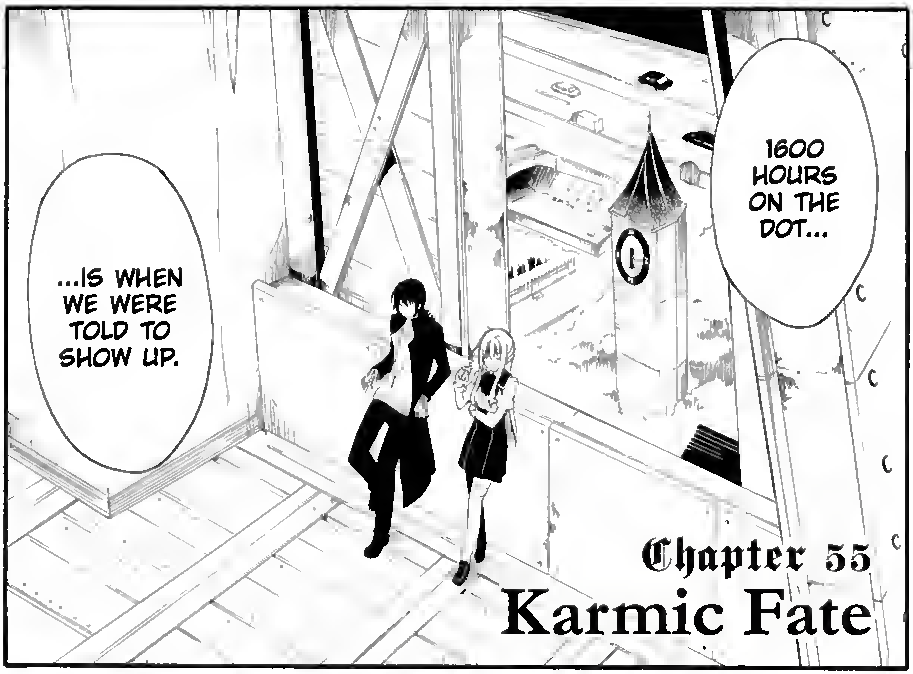
...IS BECAUSE OF MY GOOD LUCK?
THEN... I COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT IT.


THIS...
...EXTREME LUCK OF MINE.

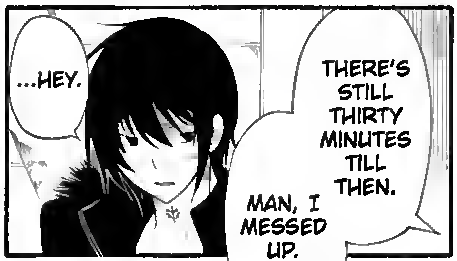

VWMM
Luck
—YEAH.
I'VE DECIDED ...
...WHAT I'LL SUBMIT FOR THE CONTRACT.

BLOODY CROSS

BLOODY CROSS



Chapter 55
Karmic Fate



YOU HAVE NO SENSE OF REAL DANGER!
ペシ
PEN (SLAP)
OW.

HUH? WHY?
OH, ER, UH...
AS...
...INSURANCE FOR A MINOR ERRAND?

SHUT UP. THAT'S WHY I CALLED AND HAD YOU COME ALONG.
BE SELF-AWARE! DON'T WANDER OUT RECKLESSLY!!
ARE YOU STUPID?
...THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE EITHER SATSUKI OR ARCANA MAY TRY TO KIDNAP YOU BECAUSE THEY NEED A BLACK SEAL BEARER!
LISTEN! NOW THAT YOU'RE NO LONGER IN KAMU-HABURI'S CLUTCHES...
"A FAIRLY USELESS GOOD-TIME CHARLIE, BUT ONE WHO MIGHT AT LEAST BE HANDY IN A PINCH" KIND OF INSURANCE.

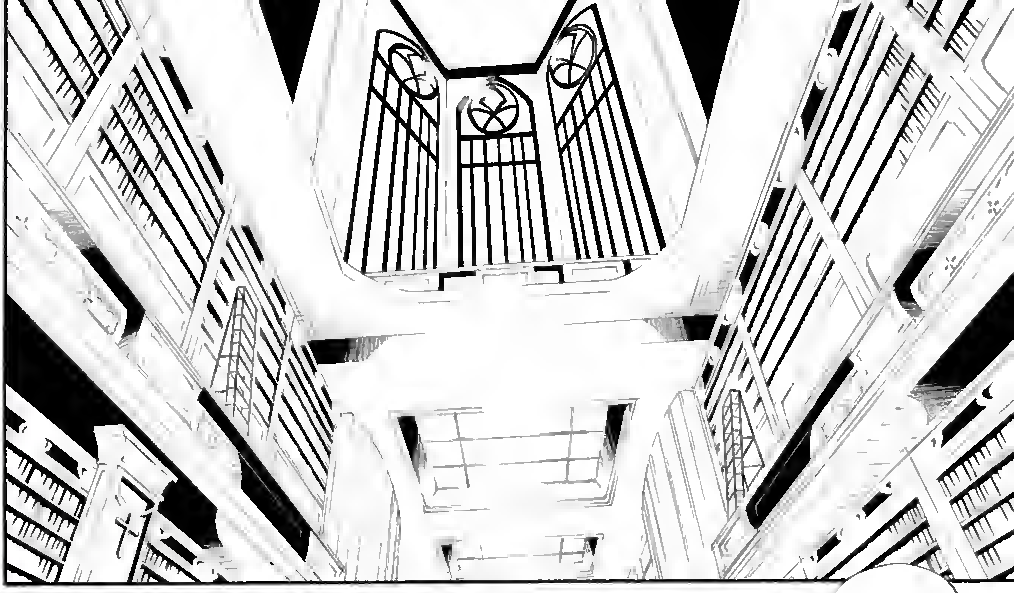
...WELL, WELL...

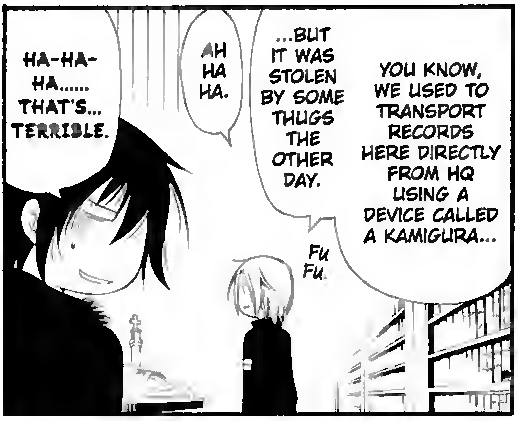
HEL-LO?
PI (BEEP)
YES.

PINN.

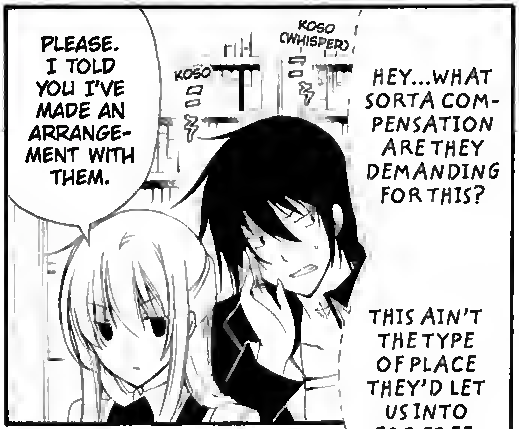
LOOKS LIKE I WAS RIGHT TO CALL AS SOON AS WE GOT HERE.
THEY'LL OPEN IT EARLY FOR US.

GO
GO
GO
GO
GO
GO
GOGO
RUMBL
...HUH?
WHA Is
DOORS!?
HUGE !
GO
GO
NOW,
THEN.
LET'S
GO IN.
DOOR: ARCHIVE
GRR
CREAK
I MADE
ARRANGE-
MENTS...
...FOR
KAMUHABURI
TO SHOW
US THEIR
RECORDS
OF PAST
CRUSADES.
KOTSU
(TOK)




HA-HA-HA..... THAT'S... TERRIBLE.
AH HA HA.
...BUT IT WAS STOLEN BY SOME THUGS THE OTHER DAY.
FU FU.
YOU KNOW, WE USED TO TRANSPORT RECORDS HERE DIRECTLY FROM HQ USING A DEVICE CALLED A KAMIGURA...

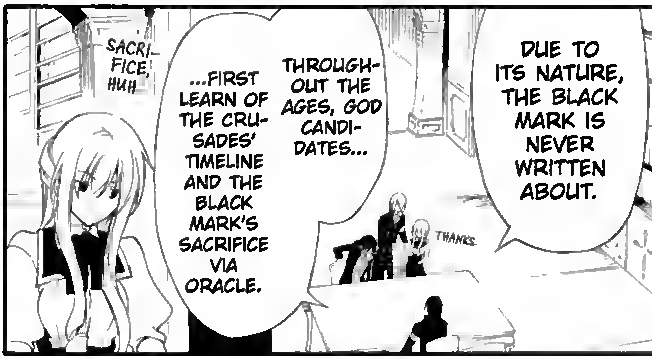
KATSU (TAK)
...THIS IS KAMU-HABURI'S ARCHIVE.
KATSU
IT'S IN ANOTHER DIMENSION DETACHED FROM HQ...
...AND HOLDS RECORDS PERTAINING MAINLY TO THE CRUSADES, DIVINE POWER, AND DIVINE RELICS.


KOSO
KOSO (WHISPER)
PLEASE. I TOLD YOU I'VE MADE AN ARRANGE-MENT WITH THEM.
HEY...WHAT SORTA COM-PENSATION ARE THEY DEMANDING FOR THIS?
THIS AIN'T THE TYPE OF PLACE THEY'D LET US INTO FOR FREE.

KAMU-HABURI, THE FAIR AND KIND OVERSEER OF THE CRUSADES ...
...HAS OFFERED TO TEACH THE POOR, IGNORANT BLACK SEAL BEARER ABOUT THE PROCEED-INGS.
I'M SO GRATE-FUL, I COULD CRY.
AND WHO KNOWS ...
...MAYBE IN RETURN I'LL FORGIVE THEM FOR THE BRAIN-WASHING.
AH HA HA...
SHE USED THAT AS BLACK-MAIL, HUH.
I SEE.
TOKIWA-SAN...
I'VE BROUGHT OUR GUESTS.
AH, YES.
THANK YOU.
EEP!
HOW VICIOUSLY DID THIS WENCH SHAKE THEM DOWN!?
THAT'S THE BOSS HIMSELF!
YOU'RE EARLY.
WEL-COME...
...LADY TSUKI-MIYA, BEARER OF THE BLACK MARK.

HELLO.
YOU...
...PROMISED TO TEACH ME ABOUT PRIOR CRUSADES AND THE BLACK SEAL TODAY, RIGHT?

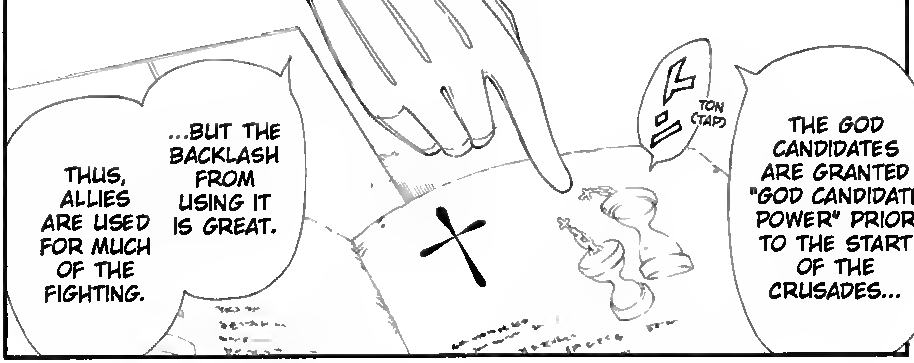
TSUZUKI ONLY KNEW THE PREVIOUS CRUSADES' OUTCOMES.
HE SAID HE'D NEVER EVEN HEARD ABOUT THE BLACK SEAL UNTIL YOU TOLD HIM.
HE WAS COMPLETELY USELESS
CLACK
THAT'S PROBABLY TRUE.

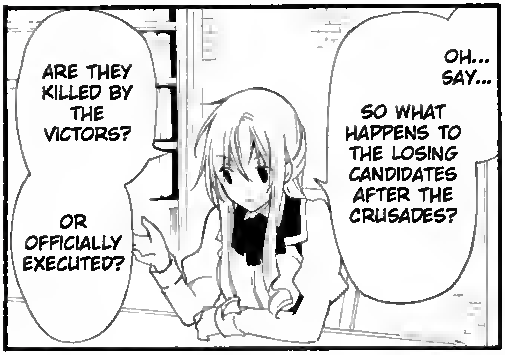

DUE TO ITS NATURE, THE BLACK MARK IS NEVER WRITTEN ABOUT.
THROUGHOUT THE AGES, GOD CANDIDATES...
...FIRST LEARN OF THE CRUSADES' TIMELINE AND THE BLACK MARK'S SACRIFICE VIA ORACLE.
SACRIFICE, HUH
THANKS

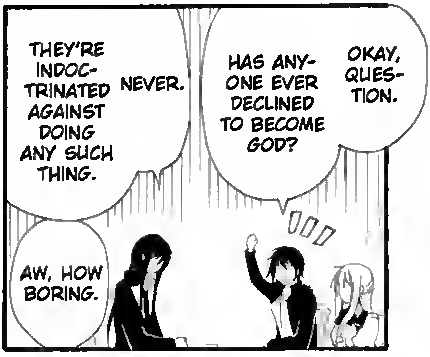
.....BY THE WAY, AS FAR AS I AM AWARE...
...THERE'S NEVER BEEN A CASE WHERE BOTH BLACK MARK BEARERS' LIVES WERE SPARED.
THOUGH THERE ARE QUITE A FEW WHERE BOTH DIED.

I SUSPECT YOU SEEK HINTS FOR UNDOING THE BLACK MARK...
...BUT DON'T GET YOUR HOPES UP TOO MUCH.

...WELL, AS PROMISED, THIS WILL GIVE YOU A BASIC GRASP OF THE CRUSADES.
KIKU-SAKA.
YES, SIR.
ANYTHING RELEVANT FROM AFTER THE TWENTIETH CRUSADE... CORRECT?
DOSA (THUD)
DOSA
HMPH. THANKS FOR THE ADVICE.
BLEH!
SO UNCUTE.
.....
THERE HAVE BEEN AROUND FORTY CRUSADES SO FAR...
...OCCURRING AT A PACE OF ROUGHLY ONCE EVERY HALF-CENTURY.
THEY CARE LESS ABOUT THOSE AFTER THE MIDDLE PERIOD.
IT SHOULD BE FINE TO SHOW THEM TO YOU.
PARA (FLIP)
THE SANCTUM'S CONSENT IS NECESSARY TO RELEASE RECORDS OF THE EARLIEST CRUSADES.
13
CRUSADE
TWO GOD CANDIDATES SELECTED VIA ORACLE FIGHT OVER THIRTEEN NUMBERED RELICS...
...AND THE ONE WHO HOLDS THEM ALL AT THE END SUMMONS THE APPEARANCE OF THE ALTAR...
...AND PROFFERS A BLACK MARK'S BLOOD UPON IT TO GAIN THE RIGHT TO BECOME THE NEXT GOD.

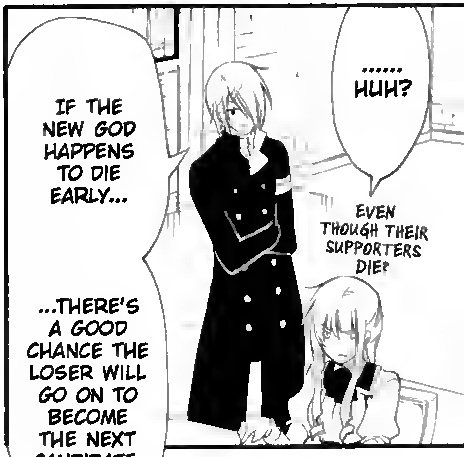

THE GOD CANDIDATES ARE GRANTED "GOD CANDIDATE POWER" PRIOR TO THE START OF THE CRUSADES...
TON (TAP)
...BUT THE BACKLASH FROM USING IT IS GREAT.
THUS, ALLIES ARE USED FOR MUCH OF THE FIGHTING.


OH... SAY...
SO WHAT HAPPENS TO THE LOSING CANDIDATES AFTER THE CRUSADES?
ARE THEY KILLED BY THE VICTORS?
OR OFFICIALLY EXECUTED?


OKAY, QUESTION.
HAS ANYONE EVER DECLINED TO BECOME GOD?
NEVER.
THEY'RE INDOCTRINATED AGAINST DOING ANY SUCH THING.
AW, HOW BORING.

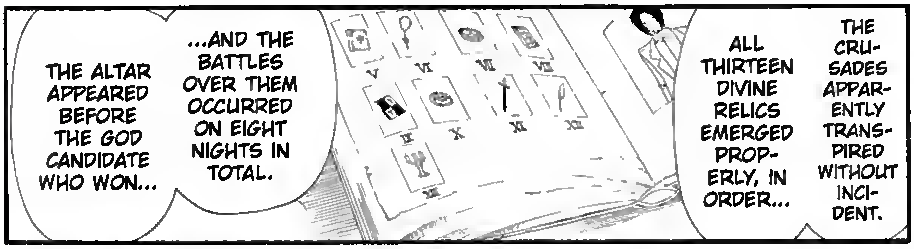
...NO...
NOTHING IN PARTICULAR.

THAT'S WHY THEY'RE CONFINED SOMEWHERE REMOTE, AS THEY WERE BEFORE THEIR CRUSADES...
THOUGH THEY DIE FROM VARIOUS CAUSES.
OLD AGE, ILLNESS... OR OCCASIONALLY FROM GOING MAD.
...AND MOST LIVE IN ISOLATION UNTIL THEIR DEATH.


.....
HUH?
EVEN THOUGH THEIR SUPPORTERS DIE?
IF THE NEW GOD HAPPENS TO DIE EARLY...
...THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THE LOSER WILL GO ON TO BECOME THE NEXT CANDIDATE.

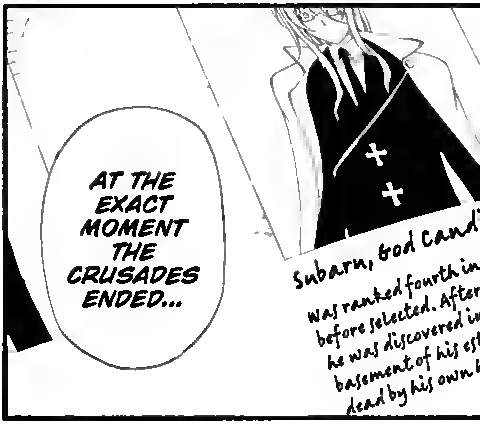
SU (SSK)
41
CRUSADE
...THE RECORD OF THE LAST CRUSADE.
BECAUSE IT WAS THE MOST RECENT, IT WILL PROBABLY BE THE EASIEST FOR YOU TO UNDER-STAND.
...HUH.
...AH...
THIS MAY PROVIDE REFERENCE TO THE CURRENT CRUSADES' FLOW.
PARA (FLIP)
LAST TIME, THE BLACK MARK BEARERS WERE A 23-YEAR-OLD MAN AND A NINE-YEAR-OLD GIRL.
THE ONE SACRIFICED ...
...WAS THE NINE-YEAR-OLD GIRL.

...AND THE NAME OF THE DEFEATED CANDIDATE WAS SUBARU.
THE WINNING GOD CANDIDATE WAS KAI...
...AND THE VICTOR WAS OUR PREVIOUS GOD.
OF COURSE, UNLIKE THIS TIME, IT WAS A CRUSADE BETWEEN TWO ANGELS...


THE ALTAR APPEARED BEFORE THE GOD CANDIDATE WHO WON...
...AND THE BATTLES OVER THEM OCCURRED ON EIGHT NIGHTS IN TOTAL.
ALL THIRTEEN DIVINE RELICS EMERGED PROPERLY, IN ORDER...
THE CRUSADES APPARENTLY TRANSPIRED WITHOUT INCIDENT.

...THE DEFEATED CANDIDATE...
...TOOK HIS OWN LIFE.

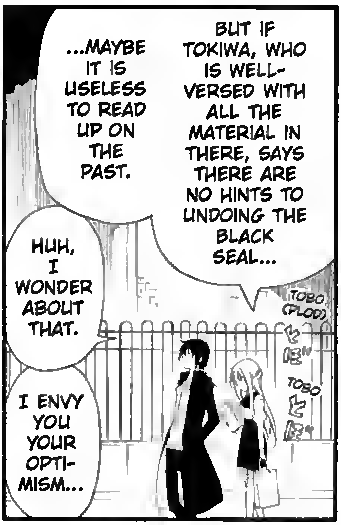
...AH...
...THERE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN A SLIGHT IRREGULARITY LAST TIME AS WELL.

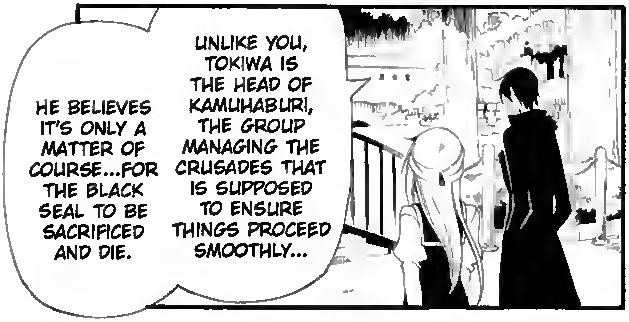

AT THE EXACT MOMENT THE CRUSADES ENDED...

NO CLUES TO BE HAD SO EASILY, HUH.
.....
HAAH.

I PLAN TO.
I DON'T WANT TO DIE.
WELL, KEEP WORKING AT IT, HM?
WILL I BE ABLE TO READ SUCH ANCIENT TEXTS?
I BORROWED A COUPLE BOOKS, JUST IN CASE...

I THINK IT'S GOOD TO QUESTION THINGS AND PEOPLE.
WELL, JUST...


...MAYBE IT IS USELESS TO READ UP ON THE PAST.
BUT IF TOKIWA, WHO IS WELL-VERSED WITH ALL THE MATERIAL IN THERE, SAYS THERE ARE NO HINTS TO UNDOING THE BLACK SEAL...
HUH, I WONDER ABOUT THAT.
I ENVY YOU YOUR OPTIMISM...
TOBO (FLOOD)
TOBO

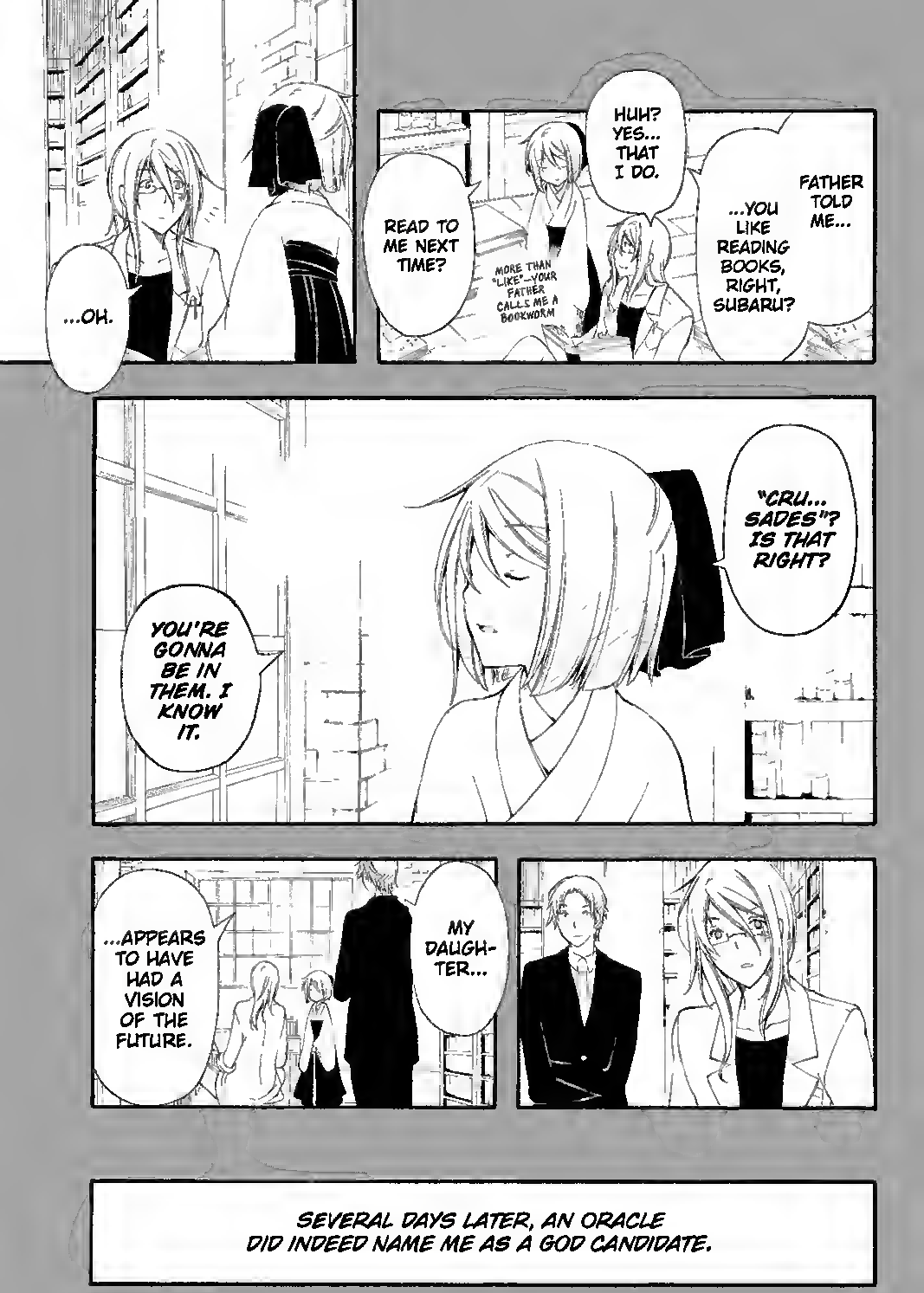

HE BELIEVES IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF COURSE...FOR THE BLACK SEAL TO BE SACRIFICED AND DIE.
UNLIKE YOU, TOKIWA IS THE HEAD OF KAMUIHABURI, THE GROUP MANAGING THE CRUSADES THAT IS SUPPOSED TO ENSURE THINGS PROCEED SMOOTHLY...

...AND HE SIMPLY HASN'T NOTICED THE CLUES TO UNDOING THE BLACK SEAL.
IT MAY BE THAT HIS OPINION IS CLOUDED BY THE USUAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE CRUSADES...

...I SEE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.
I DIDN'T GET THE SENSE HE WAS LYING, BUT...
WANT ME TO HOLD THAT?
IT'S ALSO ENTIRELY POSSIBLE HE'S DELIBERATELY WITHHOLDING INTEL.
YUP, YUP. STAYING POSITIVE IS GOOD.
...OUR CHANCES OF FINDING A HOLE IN AN ANCIENT CURSE AREN'T ZERO.
...BUT BOTH SCIENCE AND SPELLS HAVE PROGRESSED SINCE THE OLD DAYS, SO...
TON (PAT)
...WELL IN ANY CASE, RIGHT NOW WE DON'T HAVE A SINGLE CLUE...
FLIP
UNEND-ING...
I CAUGHT A PIECE OF IT!
ZZAP!
AND REPEAT
INSPECT
REPELLED
...ALL RIGHT, BUT HOW MANY MORE TIMES?
OH. WOULD YOU LET ME HAVE ANOTHER GO AT DECODING THE BLACK SEAL?
UGH...
PARA
PARA
THAT GOD CANDIDATE WHO LOST...
IF HE WAS GONNA OFF HIMSELF, HE SHOULD'VE TAKEN HER PLACE.
THE PREVIOUS BLACK SEAL BEARER... WAS NINE?

HE PROBABLY COULDN'T, GIVEN THE SYSTEM.
I WAS BEING SARCAS-TIC.
...AH, I SEE.
"GOD CANDIDATE SUBARU.
"WAS RANKED FOURTH IN SUCCESSION BEFORE SELECTED.
"AFTER THE CRUSADES, HE WAS DISCOVERED IN THE BASE-MENT OF HIS ESTATE, DEAD BY HIS OWN HAND."
...YEESH, TO THINK SOME OF US ARE PRAYING THAT THEY WON'T DIE...
...WHILE OTHERS WANT DEATH BAD ENOUGH TO COMMIT SUICIDE ...
SAMA OPWOOSHD
WHAT AN UNFAIR WORLD WE LIVE IN...
—...
.....
SO TRUE.

FIFTY YEARS AGO...
...HUH? WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY, TOJIMA?
PAY ATTENTION, SUBARU! THIS IS MY DAUGHTER.
NOW GO ON.
N...
NICE TO MEET YOU, SUBARU.
I AM YUZUKA.
OH! SHE'S BLIND ...?
YUZUKA... SHOW THE PROPER RESPECT. HE'S GOING TO BE GOD.
HEY, HEY, DON'T TELL HER LIES.
I'M NOT EVEN A GOD CANDIDATE YET.
JUST A GOD CANDIDATE CANDIDATE. FOURTH-RANK
AN EMINENT PERSONAGE, EITHER WAY.
.....


...OH.
READ TO ME NEXT TIME?
MORE THAN "LIKE"—YOUR FATHER CALLS ME A BOOKWORM
HUH? YES... THAT I DO.
...YOU LIKE READING BOOKS, RIGHT, SUBARU?
FATHER TOLD ME...
"CRU... SADES"? IS THAT RIGHT?
YOU'RE GONNA BE IN THEM. I KNOW IT.
...APPEARS TO HAVE HAD A VISION OF THE FUTURE.
MY DAUGH-TER...

SEVERAL DAYS LATER, AN ORACLE
DID INDEED NAME ME AS A GOD CANDIDATE.

GOOD LUCK, SUBA-RU!
YOU'RE GONNA WIN THE FIRST CRUSADE.
THE FIRST CRUSADE. VICTORY.
I REALLY DID WIN! YOU'RE AMAZING, YUZUKA!
OF COURSE!
I ONLY EVER SEE HAPPY THINGS-TO-BE, YOU KNOW.
.....
TOJI-MA...
THIRD CRU-SADE...

AFTER THAT...
...THE FIFTH AND SIXTH DIVINE RELICS WERE TAKEN BY THE ENEMY.
...I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO SEE MUCH LATELY...
MY BODY... SEEMS OFF.
A BLACK SEAL...
ZAWA- (MURMUR)
YUZUKA HAS BEEN SELECTED AS THE CRUSADES' SACRIFICE ...
...IT'S ALL RIGHT, YUZUKA.
I SWEAR TO PROTECT YOU, TO MAKE SURE YOU SURVIVE.

BA
CYANIKO
JUST...
...SEE HAPPY THINGS FOR ME AGAIN.
...I DON'T SEE ANYTHING ANYMORE.
BUT... THE ALTAR HASN'T APPEARED YET.
DURING THE FINAL BATTLE... I GOT CAUGHT...
I FELL INTO THE ENEMY'S TRAP AND WAS ROBBED OF ALL MY RELICS.
GOOOO (BLAMMZE)
KPP!
UGH!
..... DAM- MIT.

I HAD YUZUKA HIDDEN IN A HEAVILY-SHIELDED ROOM...
...WITHIN AN ESTATE NOT KNOWN TO MY ENEMY.
THE OTHER BLACK SEAL BEARER WORSHIPS THE ENEMY GOD CANDIDATE.
IF THEY CAN'T FIND YUZUKA, IT'S LIKELY HE'LL OFFER HIS OWN LIFE.

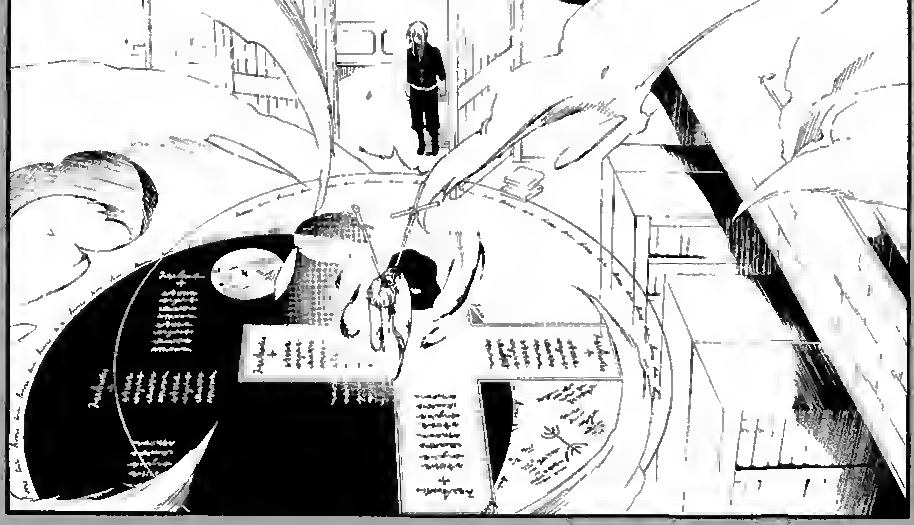
BY GETTING INVOLVED WITH THE CRUSADES... WITH ME... EVERYONE'S LIVES HAVE BEEN DESTROYED.
I'VE GOT TO AT LEAST PROTECT YUZUKA AT TOJIMA'S...

YUZUKA .....

I TOLD YOU TO HIDE, YUZUKA.
WHERE ARE YOU?

..... YUZU-KA?

...AH...



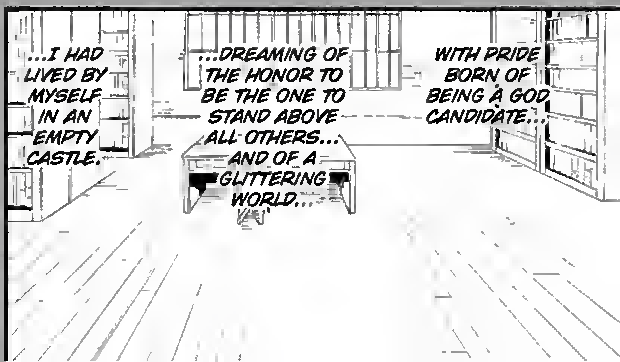
THE END OF THE CRUSADES

THE ALTAR APPEARS, AND ONLY THE GOD CANDIDATE WHO POSSESSES ALL THE RELICS AND THE BLACK SEAL'S SACRIFICIAL BLOOD...

...TRAVELS TO WHERE THE ALTAR IS...

I'D BEEN ALLOWED TO LIVE TO BECOME GOD.

BUT THESE CRUSADES WERE NOT A GLORIOUS THING.


...I HAD LIVED BY MYSELF IN AN EMPTY CASTLE.
...DREAMING OF THE HONOR TO BE THE ONE TO STAND ABOVE ALL OTHERS... AND OF A GLITTERING WORLD...
WITH PRIDE BORN OF BEING A GOD CANDIDATE...

SACRI-
FICE.
DEATH.
SCHEM-
ING.
BE-
TRAYAL.
...IF HE IS TAUGHT TO KILL PEOPLE HIM- OR HERSELF...
IT SEEMS TO ME THAT A GOD IS DEFILED...
...AHH...
HOW WEIGHTY...
...THESE THOUGHTS OF MINE ARE.....
BESIDES, WHAT IS "GOD" ANYWAY?
THAT ONE CAN BECOME GOD BY WINNING A CONTEST... THROUGH A RITUAL...
THE MOMENT ONE IS BORN UPON THE EARTH, WE'RE ALL "PEOPLE," NO MATTER HOW WE FLAIL ABOUT.

...DE-PLOY.
VLIN (VWMM)
THE GRIMOIRE OF BE-GINNINGS, VERSE ZERO.
KIII (VWEEE)
SURU (ASHING)
IT IS A FORBIDDEN SPELL OF REINCAR-NATION.
WHAT I'M USING IS A PRO-HIBITED SPELL...
...ONE THAT WILL CURSE AND DESTROY THE PRIN-CIPLES OF THIS WORLD.

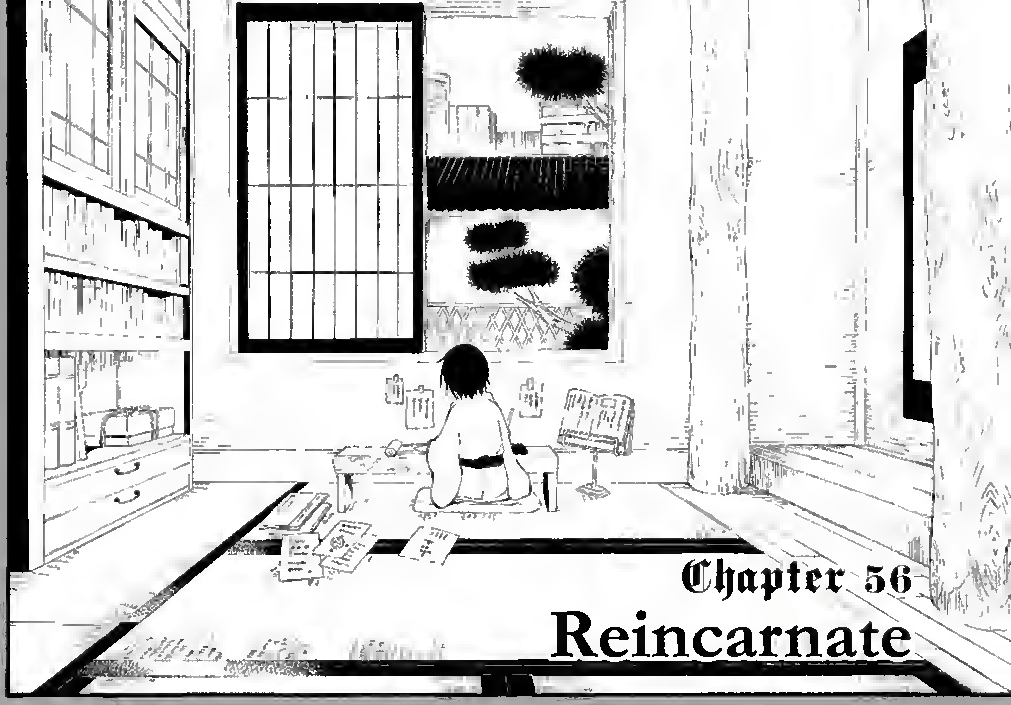
THE DESTINATION OF MY REINCARNATION
WAS THE BODY OF A CHILD BORN THIRTY-TWO YEARS LATER.

YOU'RE UP EARLY TODAY...
...OH!
...HI-NATA.

BLOODY CROSS

BLOODY CROSS

IN THE CRUSADES THAT TOOK PLACE FIFTY YEARS AGO...
...I PARTICIPATED AS GOD CANDIDATE SUBARU AND LOST.
THEN, USING A FORBIDDEN REINCARNATION SPELL...
...I WAS REBORN INTO HINATA'S BODY IN TIME FOR THE NEXT CRUSADE FIFTY YEARS LATER.



Chapter 56
Reincarnate

IT WAS A SPELL OF REINCARNATION...
...BUT IT DOESN'T APPEAR TO CARRY OVER PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND MEMORIES INTACT.
AT FIRST, I ONLY HAD VERY FAINT RECOLLECTIONS OF THE PAST.
LOOKS LIKE I WAS REBORN INTO THIS BODY...
...FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS "CRUSADE" THING.

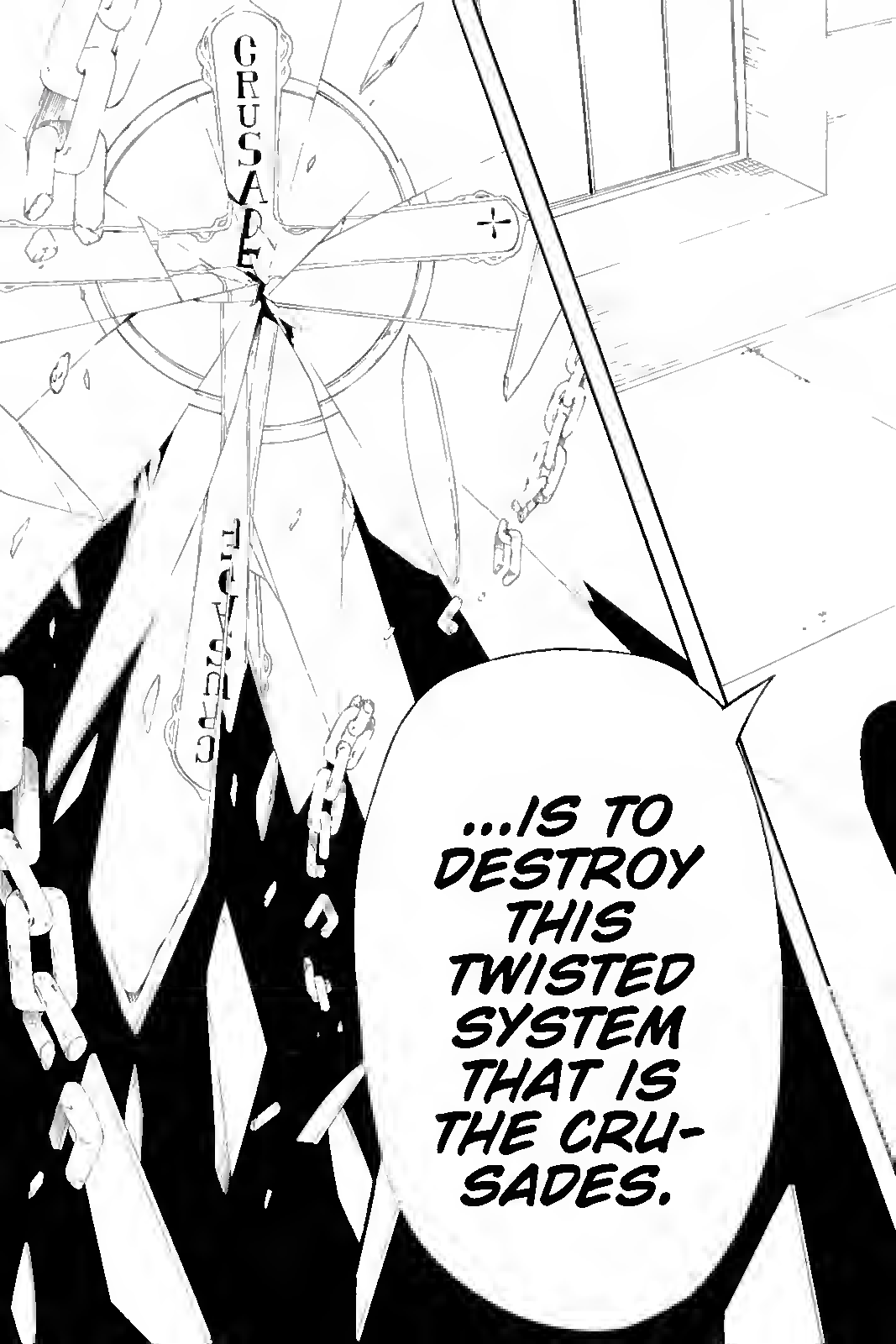
I NEEDED TO GET RID OF THE MARK BEFORE THE CRUSADE ...
EXTRA WORK I COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT.
WHAT A PAIN.
MY NEW BODY COMES FROM A LINEAGE OF HUMAN SPELL-CASTERS, BUT...
...PERHAPS DUE TO SUBARU'S GREAT VIRTUE, A MIXED-RACE MARK APPEARED ...
...WHEN THE ANGEL'S SOUL ENTERED THE HUMAN BODY.
...BUT BEING OF A SPELL-CASTERS' LINE WAS CONVENIENT.
USING WHAT DIMLY REMAINED OF SUBARU'S KNOWLEDGE...
...I LEARNED SPELLS SUITED FOR THIS BODY.
...I HAVE LESS POWER NOW THAN WHEN I WAS A GOD CANDIDATE.
... EXCEPT ...
IT WAS VEXING.
CLENCH

I TRIED TO ERASE THE MIXED-RACE MARK BEFORE THE CRUSADES STARTED...
...BUT A FELLOW MIXED-RACE HUMAN'S INTER-FERENCE PREVENTED THAT...
...AND THE FIRST CRUSADE BEGAN.
I'LL UNDO THE CURSE OF WHICHEVER ONE OF YOU BRINGS ME THE KEY...
...USING THIS PROPHECY BOOK'S DIVINE POWER.
I WAS ABLE TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THIS NEW CRU-SADE'S GOD CANDIDATE...
...AND ARRANGE THINGS IN SUCH A WAY THAT I COULD CONTINUE TO BE INVOLVED IN THE CRUSADES.
AN-OTHER DUMB MOVE.
SHADDUP

THE END-GAME IS NEAR.
...WITH THE EMERGENCE OF THE BLACK SEALS AND THE ESCALATING CRUSADES ...
...THE FUZZY MEMORIES AND KNOWL-EDGE OF MY PREVIOUS LIFE HAVE BECOME CLEARER.
I ALSO KNOW WITH CERTAINTY NOW...
...WHY I REINCAR-NATED MYSELF.
TON (TAP)

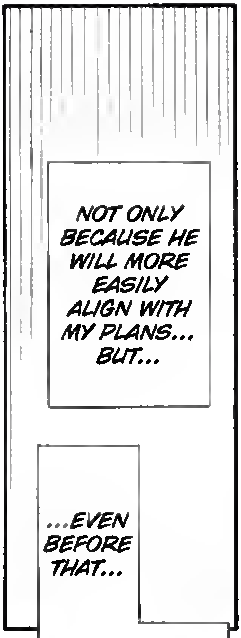
MY GOAL...
...IS TO DESTROY THIS TWISTED SYSTEM THAT IS THE CRU-SADES.
CRUSADE

MY GOAL...


CRUSADE
...IS TO DESTROY THIS TWISTED SYSTEM THAT IS THE CRU-SADES.

...I ALIGNED WITH SATSUKI FOR A BIT, THEN RETURNED TO TSUZUKI.
DURING THIS CRU-SADE...
AFTER OBSERVING BOTH GOD CANDI-DATES...

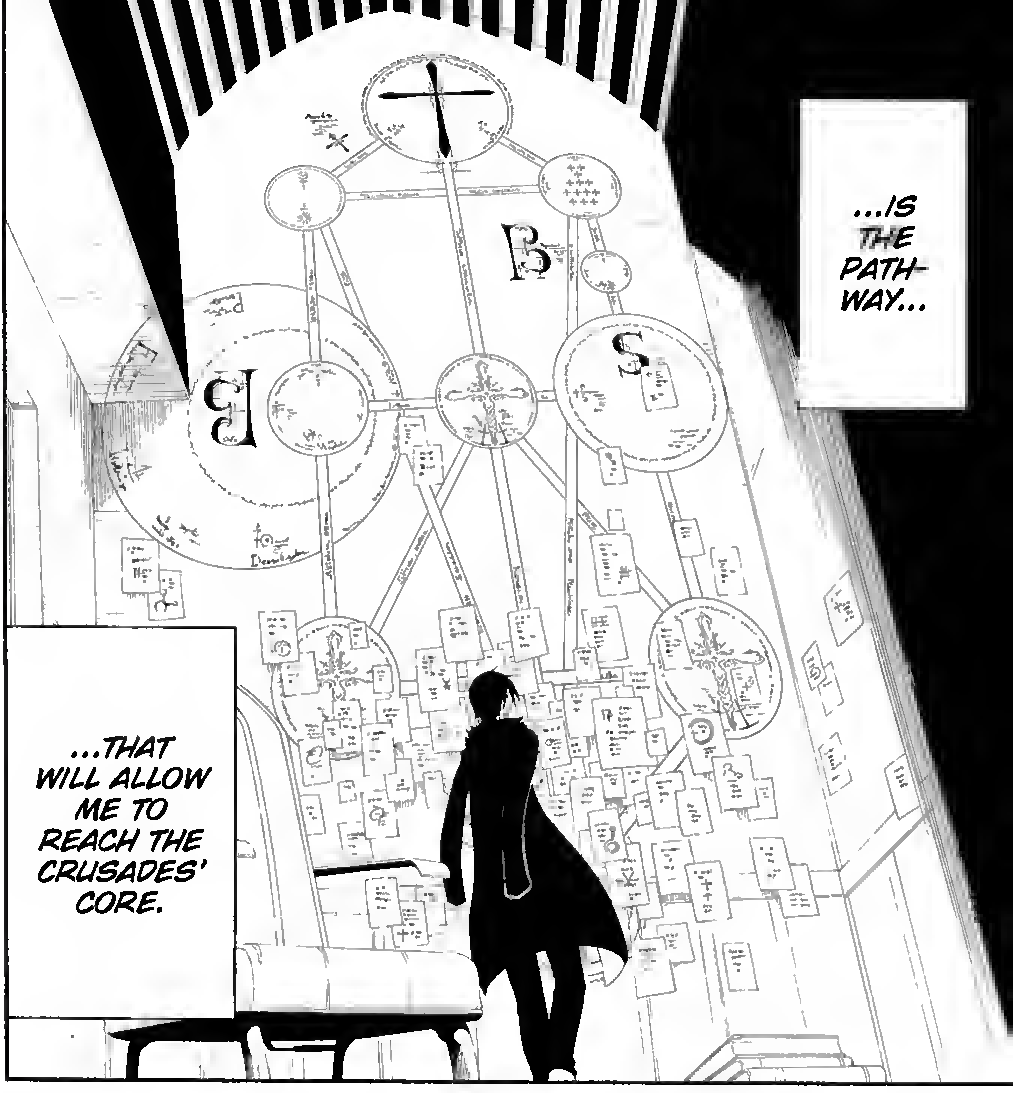
...MY CON-CLU-SION...
...WAS THAT TSUZUKI WAS BETTER SUITED.


NOT ONLY BECAUSE HE WILL MORE EASILY ALIGN WITH MY PLANS... BUT...
...EVEN BEFORE THAT...
...I FEEL THAT HE MIGHT ARRIVE AT THE SAME PLACE I HAVE.

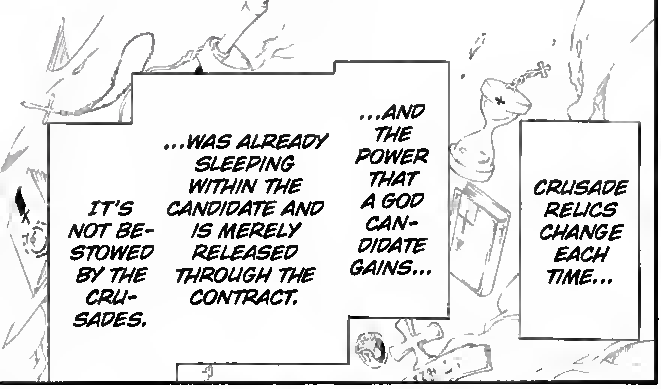
THE BLACK SEAL IS A SACRIFICE? YOU'RE JOKING, RIGHT?
ALL THE PAST GODS HAVE DONE THIS!?

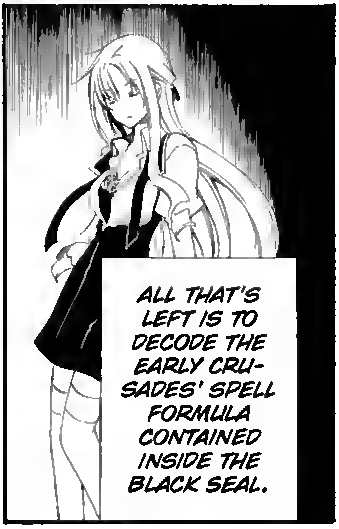
SATSUKI WON'T DO.

HE TRIED TO FORCE AN EARLY END TO THE CRUSADES USING A SHORTCUT...
...AND DID SUCCEED IN MESSING UP THE TIME-LINE...
...TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HIS GREATER ABILITIES TO PLAY WITH THE CRUSADES.
DOES EVERYONE WHO HAS THE UPPER HAND IN A BATTLE BEHAVE LIKE THIS?
THAT GUY FIFTY YEARS AGO WAS THE SAME WAY.
BASTARDS WHO CAN'T BE CHALLENGED ARE REALLY... "I'LL DO AS I PLEASE" TYPES.
TOGE (PRICKLE)
TOGE
(ENEMY) GOD CANDIDATE FIFTY YEARS EARLIER
.....
THEY MAY BE WARY OF ME, BUT...
KII (CREAK)
...I CANNOT LET THIS THING I'VE WORKED ON IN SECRET...
...BE FOR NOTH-ING.
THIS...

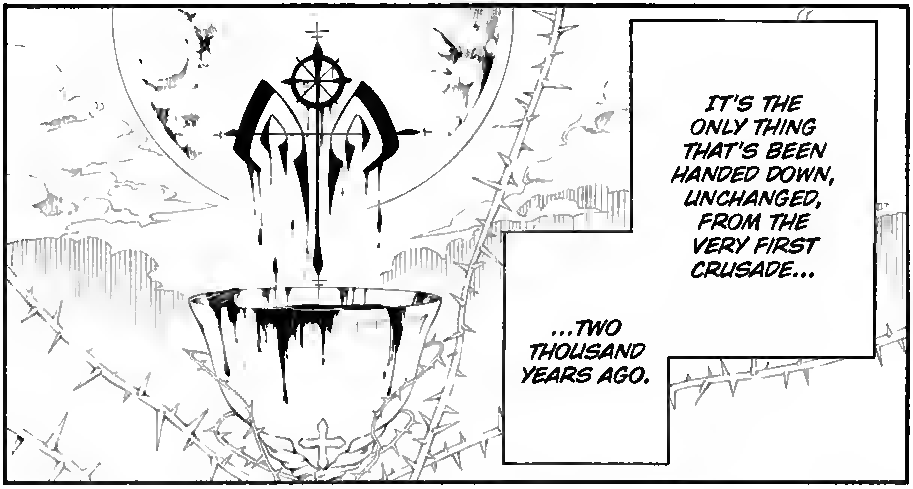

...IS THE PATH-WAY...
...THAT WILL ALLOW ME TO REACH THE CRUSADES' CORE.

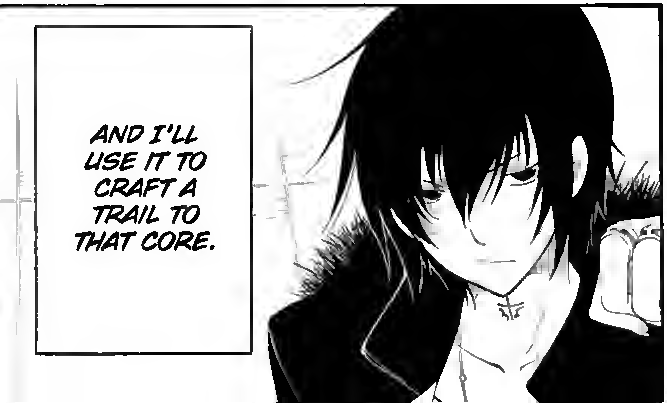
MY MEMORIES OF THE PREVIOUS CRU-SADES...
...AND BOTH SUBARU'S AND HINATA'S KNOWLEDGE.
I USED EVERY SCRAP AVAILABLE TO ME, AND THIS IS HOW FAR I'VE COME.
I'LL BE ABLE TO COMPLETE IT VERY SOON.


CRUSADE RELICS CHANGE EACH TIME...
...AND THE POWER THAT A GOD CANDIDATE GAINS...
...WAS ALREADY SLEEPING WITHIN THE CANDIDATE AND IS MERELY RELEASED THROUGH THE CONTRACT.
IT'S NOT BESTOWED BY THE CRUSADES.


ALL THAT'S LEFT IS TO DECODE THE EARLY CRUSADES' SPELL FORMULA CONTAINED INSIDE THE BLACK SEAL.

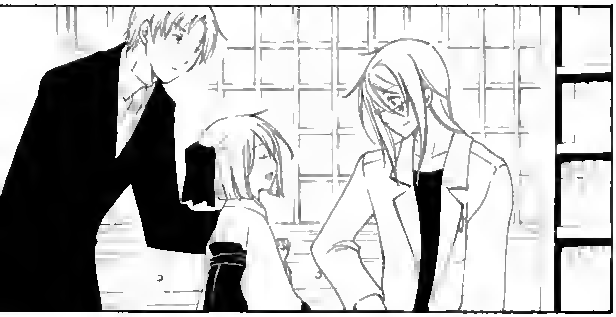
...BUT THE BLACK SEAL IS DIFFERENT.


IT'S THE ONLY THING THAT'S BEEN HANDED DOWN, UNCHANGED, FROM THE VERY FIRST CRUSADE...
...TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO.


AND I'LL USE IT TO CRAFT A TRAIL TO THAT CORE.

WITHIN IT...
...THERE MUST BE A DESCRIPTION OF THE CRUSADES' STRUCTURE... ITS CORE.
GU CLENCHED

...NOT THAT...
...ANY OF IT WILL BRING BACK MY DEAD FRIENDS...
...OR TURN BACK THE CLOCK.
THE PREVIOUS BLACK SEAL BEARER... WAS NINE?
IRA GIRIKO
THAT WENCH... HOW DARE SHE JUDGE SO HARSHLY WHEN SHE DOESN'T KNOW A THING.
IF HE WAS GONNA OFF HIMSELF, HE SHOULD'VE TAKEN HER PLACE.
THAT GOD CANDIDATE WHO LOST...



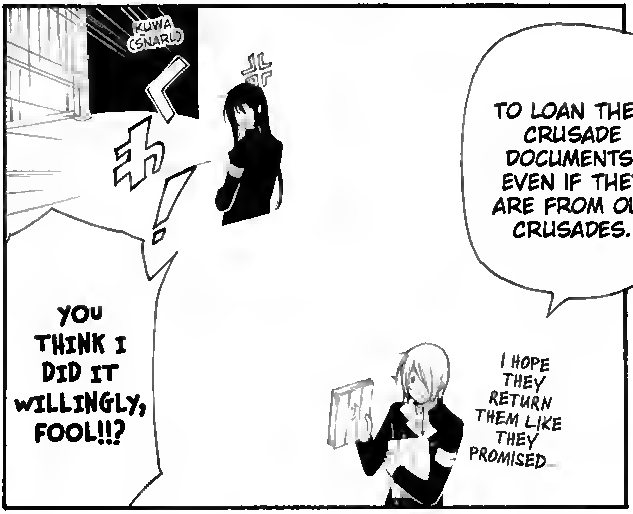
IF I'D DIED AND THE REST OF YOU SURVIVED...

...WOULD THINGS HAVE TURNED OUT BETTER...

...YU-ZUKA?

KAMU-HABURI.
MAN...
YOU'RE SO GENEROUS, TOKIWA-SAN.

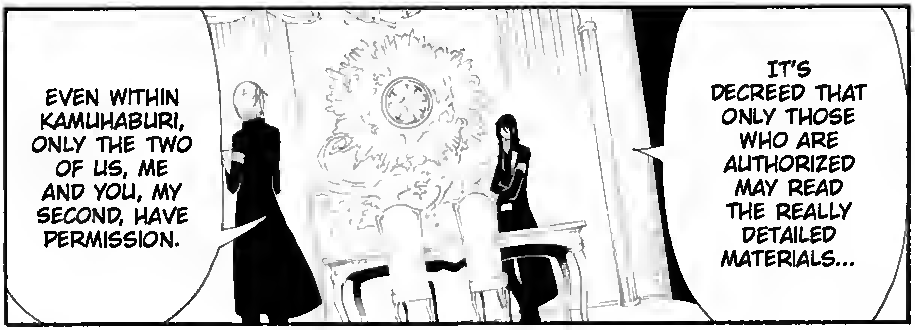
WANA (TREMBLE)
I WAS ONLY GOING TO LET THEM LOOK, BUT THOSE CON ARTISTS...
WANA

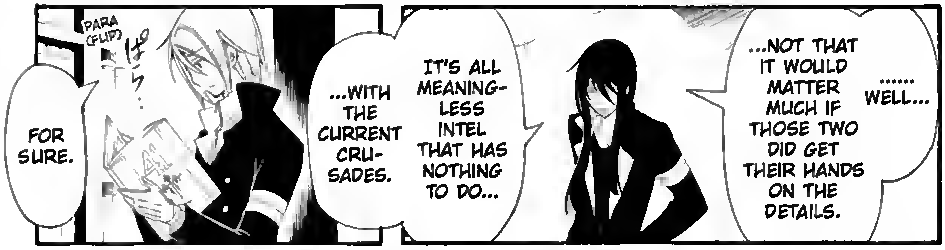

KUWA (SNARL)
YOU THINK I DID IT WILLINGLY, FOOL!!?
TO LOAN THEM CRUSADE DOCUMENTS, EVEN IF THEY ARE FROM OLD CRUSADES.
I HOPE THEY RETURN THEM LIKE THEY PROMISED

...WELL, EVEN SO...
.....

KAMUHABURI REALLY IS AN IMPARTIAL CRUSADES OVERSEER! SO REASONABLE!
YOU'LL PROSTRATE YOURSELF RIGHT NOW AND APOLOGIZE FOR THE BRAIN-WASHING?
HUH?
UNH ...
...WHA...!? HEY, THOSE AREN'T ALLOWED TO BE TAKEN OUT OF—
I'M BORROWING A FEW SO I CAN GO OVER THEM IN MORE DETAIL.
I SHALL NEVER AGREE TO ADVISE THEM AGAIN...
NEVER!
THE HUMILI-ATION!

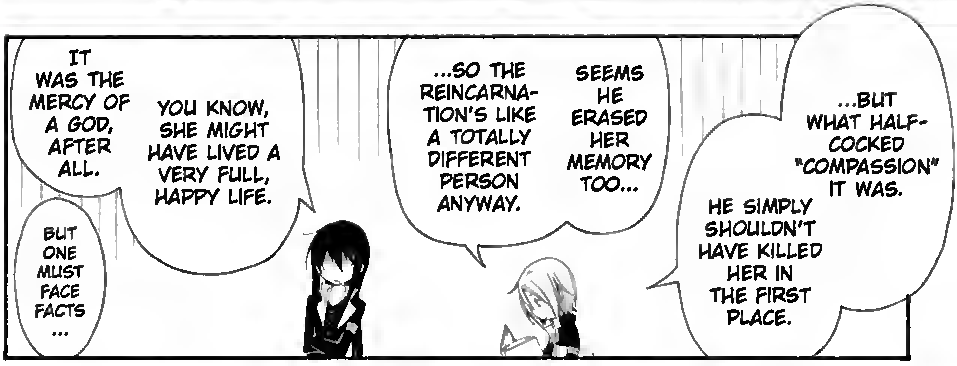
THANKFULLY, THEY DIDN'T TAKE THE ONES THAT ADDRESS TOP-SECRET MATTERS.
YOU LOANED THEM THE "PUBLIC" VERSIONS, CORRECT?
OF COURSE.


IT'S DECREED THAT ONLY THOSE WHO ARE AUTHORIZED MAY READ THE REALLY DETAILED MATERIALS...
EVEN WITHIN KAMUHABURI, ONLY THE TWO OF US, ME AND YOU, MY SECOND, HAVE PERMISSION.

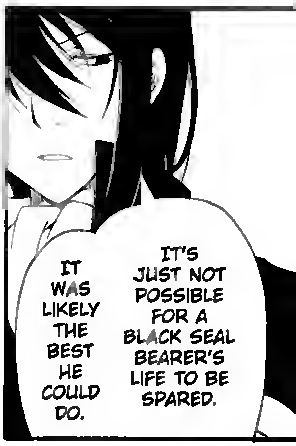

...NOT THAT IT WOULD MATTER MUCH IF THOSE TWO DID GET THEIR HANDS ON THE DETAILS.
..... WELL...
IT'S ALL MEANING-LESS INTEL THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO...
...WITH THE CURRENT CRU-SADES.
PARA (FLIP)
FOR SURE.

PLUS...
...HEARING ABOUT THE VICTORIOUS GOD CANDIDATE'S POST-CRUSADE ACT OF "MERCY"...
...MAY TURN OUR OTHER BLACK SEAL BEARER'S STOMACH.

TELLING HER THE PREVIOUS GOD CANDIDATE SAVED THE SACRIFICED GIRL'S SOUL...
...BY REINCARNATING IT...
...ISN'T GOING TO HELP HER ANY THIS TIME AROUND.

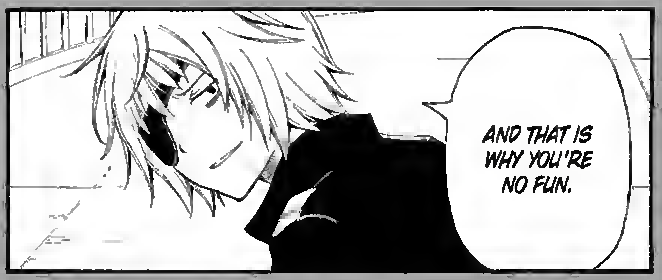

...BUT WHAT HALF-COCKED "COMPASSION" IT WAS.
HE SIMPLY SHOULDN'T HAVE KILLED HER IN THE FIRST PLACE.
SEEMS HE ERASED HER MEMORY TOO...
...SO THE REINCARNATION'S LIKE A TOTALLY DIFFERENT PERSON ANYWAY.
YOU KNOW, SHE MIGHT HAVE LIVED A VERY FULL, HAPPY LIFE.
IT WAS THE MERCY OF A GOD, AFTER ALL.
BUT ONE MUST FACE FACTS ...

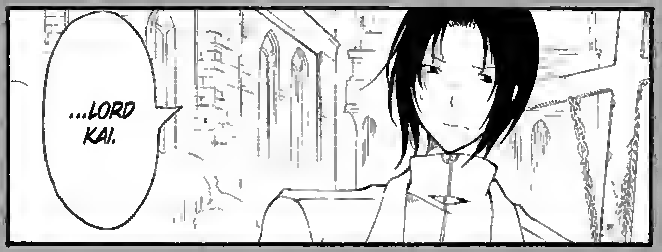
...IN FACT, THAT HE WAS EVEN ABLE TO GRANT SUCH A THING IS SHOCKING.
PRACTICALLY A MIRACLE.


IT'S JUST NOT POSSIBLE FOR A BLACK SEAL BEARER'S LIFE TO BE SPARED.
IT WAS LIKELY THE BEST HE COULD DO.

CRUSADES' END, FIFTY YEARS AGO.
...AMAZING.
SO THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO BECOME GOD.
THE THIRTEEN RELICS I GATHERED DURING THE CRUSADES...
...ARE FUSING INSIDE ME... AND TURNING INTO POWER.
THIS IS THE POWER THAT I'LL BE WIELDING AS GOD FOR THE NEXT FIFTY YEARS...
IT FEELS IT MIGHT THREATEN TO OVERFLOW IF I LET MY MIND RELAX.
YES. CONGRATULATIONS. IT IS A WONDERFUL THING.
...LORD KAI?

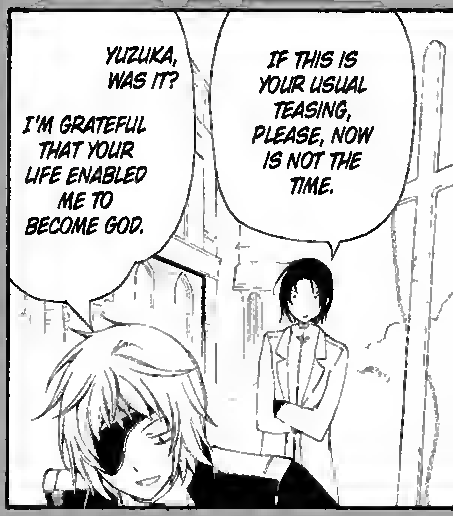
TSUKA (TOKO)
TSUKA
I KILLED HER QUITE BRUTALLY, EVEN THOUGH SHE WAS ONLY A CHILD.
THOSE ARE THE RULES. YOU HAD NO CHOICE.
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, LORD KAI.


AND THAT IS WHY YOU'RE NO FUN.


...LORD KAI.

...NOT THAT I HAVE ANY COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE CRUSADES' REQUIRE-MENTS...
...BUT IT WAS NOT A VICTORY THAT GAVE ME ANY PLEASURE.

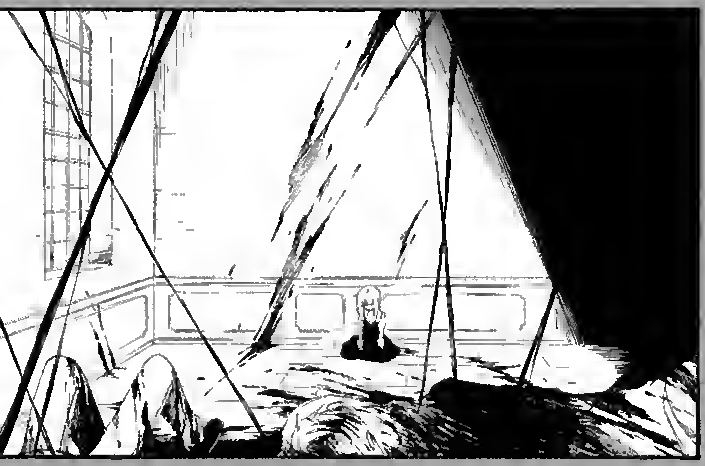
HM...
LORD KAI!
I WOULD WISH TO GIVE YOU A SUITABLE GIFT SINCE YOUR DEATH ALLOWED ME TO ASCEND, BUT...
LET'S SEE, WHAT WOULD BE GOOD...?

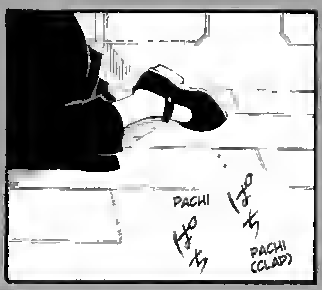

YUZUKA, WAS IT?
I'M GRATEFUL THAT YOUR LIFE ENABLED ME TO BECOME GOD.
IF THIS IS YOUR USUAL TEASING, PLEASE, NOW IS NOT THE TIME.

.....!
THAT'S IT!
WHY DON'T I BESTOW MY FIRST ACT OF DIVINE MERCY HERE...
...AS A SHOW OF GRATITUDE TO MY BENE-FACTOR.
HE'S ILL AGAIN
...GH.
ALL THAT'S REQUIRED FOR ASCENSION IS THE BLACK SEAL'S BLOOD.
KOOO (WHOOO)
MEANING YOUR SOUL OUGHTN'T BE NEEDED.
VUN GWWMO
...YOUR MEMORIES ARE UNNECESSARY TOO.
THE MEMORY OF BEING SACRI-FICED...
...WOULD BE ESPECIALLY DISCOMFIT-ING, I DARE SAY.

ABANDON ALL MEMORIES OF THY PRESENT LIFE IN THIS ERA WHERE THE CRUSADES HAVE ENDED...
...BE FREED FROM THE BLACK SEAL...
...AND LIVE FREELY AS YOU WISH THE NEXT TIME AROUND.

IT WOULD BE THIRTY-TWO YEARS LATER BEFORE THAT RELEASED SOUL HAPPENED UPON A COMPATIBLE BODY...





...
TSUKI-
MIYA.

.....
REALLY?

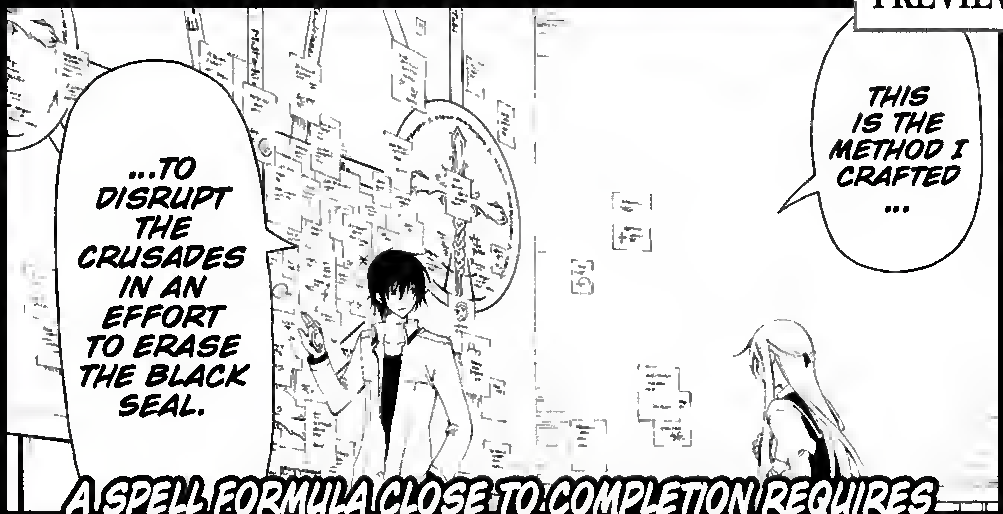
...VERY SOON NOW.
CRUSADE
FOR THIS MOMENT ONLY...
...HAVE I LIVED EIGHTEEN YEARS IN THIS BODY.
I...WILL NOT FAIL THIS TIME.

...I SHALL DESTROY THE UNJUST FOUNDA-TIONS OF THIS WORLD...
...WITH MY OWN TWO HANDS.

WHEN THIS CRUSADE REACHES ITS END...

BLOODY CROSS

PREVIEW



A SPELL FORMULA CLOSE TO COMPLETION REQUIRES THE FINAL KEY: THE CHALICE OF CREATION!

PAKA (PNOP)
I AM PAYING YOU A VISIT TODAY TO OFFER THIS TRIBUTE.
IT WOULD DELIGHT ME TO NO END IF YOU WOULD FIND IT... TO YOUR LIKING...
SU (SHFF)

WILL HINATA'S DEAREST WISH FROM HIS PREVIOUS LIFE BE FULFILLED...!?

I'M ABLE TO HAVE HOPE FOR THE FIRST TIME.
I STILL CAN'T BE-LIEVE IT...
TO FIND I MIGHT ACTU-ALLY...
...RID MYSELF OF THIS BLACK SEAL...
TH... THANK YOU.
TSU-KI—
WHAT THE...?

To be Continued in BLOODY CROSS Vol. 11!!

EASY

HOME COOKING WITH HANAMURA (DOG)

~ Recipes even the most unskilled cook can make ~

HELLO.
TODAY WE'LL BE MAKING THE SALTED PORK TONGUE BOWL FROM VOLUME 4.
IT'S EASY AND QUICK TO MAKE FOR WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.

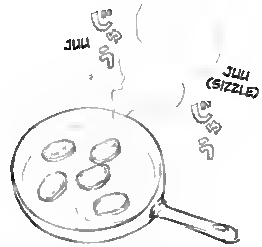
INGREDIENTS (FOR ONE SERVING)

Pork tongue	100 g (3.5 oz.)
Scallions	10~15 cm. (4~6 in.)
★Sauce	
Chicken bouillon	1 tsp.
Salt	1/2~1 tsp.
Sesame oil	to taste

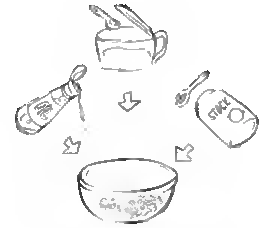
② MINCE SCALLIONS AND SOAK IN WATER FOR SEVERAL MINUTES (OR ELSE THEY MAY RETAIN SOME BITE).

① COOK RICE. USING A NABE POT YIELDS VERY DELICIOUS RICE, BUT A RICE COOKER IS OKAY TOO.

⑤ PLACE PORK TONGUE ATOP A HELPING OF RICE, SPRINKLE SAUCE ON TOP, AND YOU'RE DONE. YOUR MISSION LASTS UNTIL YOU HAVE DELIVERED IT TO YOUR GUEST WITHOUT ANYONE STEALING A BITE.

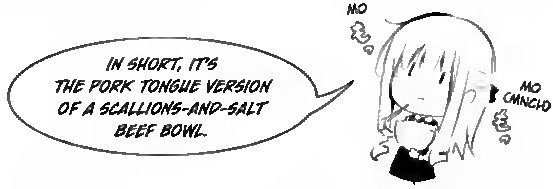


④ SAUTE SLICED PORK TONGUE IN AN OILED PAN AND LIGHTLY SEASON WITH SALT AND PEPPER. AT THIS POINT, ANY INSOLENT LOUTS FOUND TO HAVE SUBSTITUTED LOWER-QUALITY INGREDIENTS SHALL BE PUNISHED.



③ AFTER THOROUGHLY DRAINING THE WATER, ADD SAUCE INGREDIENTS TO THE SCALLIONS. MIX WELL, THEN TASTE.

(USE SALT TO ADJUST TO YOUR LIKING.)



KUWA (SNARL)
IT'S SO FULL OF FLASH-BACK ARCS, THERE'S...
...NO AFTER-WORD MATE-RIAL!!!
YES THERE IS! THIS CENTURY'S BIGGEST SCOOP: MY SECOND COVER APPEARANCE!
WAAAAH!

BLOODY CROSS ⑩

Shiwo Komeyama

Translation: Mari Morimoto • Lettering: Abigail Blackman

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